

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT

CHARLESTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS,

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, A. D. 1816.

BY REQUEST OF THE

REPUBLICAN CITIZENS OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY.

BEING THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN
INDEPENDENCE.

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BY LEONARD M. PARKER, ESQ.
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1816.

ORATION.

LET no tyrant encroach upon the festivities of this day; let not faction pollute it with her envenomed breath; let not the gloom of sorrow overshadow it; for it is consecrated to freedom.

Do Americans fully appreciate the glories of this day? Have they a just sense of their happy condition, and their elevated character? Do they prefer the enjoyments of rational liberty to the shackles of ignominious slavery? then will they on this day rejoice, for it is the anniversary of their blessings.

Some nations mark with festive honors the birthday of a monarch, distinguished only for his weakness, his vices, and his crimes; others, the downfall of one tyrant, and the uplifting of another, perhaps far less enlightened, and far more oppressive than the former; well then may Americans attune their hearts and their voices to songs of praise, and echo the shouts of joy; well then may the friends of freedom throughout the earth, on this day, rejoice; for it is the jubilee of an emancipated world.

But while we thus glory in the enjoyment of the rights and privileges of freemen, gratitude requires, that we should pay a just tribute to the memory of those who fell in their achievement. Bunker's sacred mount entombs the mortal remains of your War-

ren, and his compeers, whose blood consecrated the principles we, this day, commemorate. *Departed Heroes!* Perhaps but for you, we had yet been the subjects of tyranny, and the wretched victims of oppression! Your example shall be an awful admonition to tyrants, and a sublime lesson to future ages!

Does any one feel indifferent to his country's honour and welfare; is he a stranger to the generous feelings of patriotism; let him go to their tombs, and drink at the fountain of political love; let him invoke their valiant spirits, learn to appreciate the value of freedom, and cherish a love for his country.

Parents, take your children to this sacred fount; tell them the story of their country's wrongs; describe to them the patriotic deeds, and gallant achievements of the heroes there entombed; apprise them of the invaluable boon, purchased with the toils, and sufferings, and blood of their forefathers; and above all, instill into their youthful minds the solemn duties, which will devolve on them, and their posterity.

Honored Remains! While humanity retains one noble, generous feeling; while the holy flame of patriotism, which animated your breasts, is not wholly extinguished; so long shall your memories live in the hearts of posterity; so long shall your virtues and achievements be inscribed on the monumental marble, and swell the brilliant pages of Columbia's history!

The story of events, preceding the revolution, need not be recited. Fancy yourselves, at this moment, writing under the unrelenting hand of cruelty and oppression; danger and famine on all sides besetting

you ; your domes ascending in smoking ruins towards heaven ; fancy that you are soon to suffer all the black catalogue of miseries, which tyranny can inflict ; that you hear the clank of the chains, prepared to enslave you, and that myriads of mercenary troops are anxiously waiting to rivet them upon you ; fancy, I say, for a moment, yourselves in this situation, and you will then have but a faint image of the accumulated wrongs and aggressions, which gave rise to American independence.

The events, and glorious result of the Revolution, are also familiar to you. In the proud pages of American history, you will find recorded the toils and distresses, the privations and perils, “the patient endurance and long suffering” of every portion of the community throughout the revolutionary struggle. There too you will find the name of him, only to be mentioned with feelings of veneration, WASHINGTON, the glory of our country, the ornament of man ! The names of Montgomery, Green, Mercer, Gates, and a host of others, follow in proud succession. There too you will find a record of their dauntless valour, and heroic achievements, at Saratoga, at Princeton, at Monmouth, at the Eutaw Springs, and at Yorktown. You will also, there find recorded, an *acknowledgment*, under the hand and seal of the oppressor, that America is a free, sovereign, and independent nation.

The revolution thus honorably closed, it only remained to secure its blessings. Here an extensive field opened to the Philosopher and Statesman. The old system of confederation, adopted for temporary purposes, proved totally inadequate to command the

obedience, controul the resources, and consolidate the interests of a great nation. Distraction, uneasiness, and a general want of confidence, pervaded all parts of the country. The golden fruits of the Revolution, so hardly won, seemed to be wasting away, or still worse, about to give rise to civil commotion. The nation was literally afloat, like a ship without a rudder after a tempest.

At this awful moment, the combined wisdom of our patriots and statesmen dispelled the cloud of political darkness, and illumined the nation's prospects, by the formation and adoption of the federal constitution.

This is a stupendous monument of man's last, and greatest efforts for the preservation of liberty. It is founded on the broad bases of reason and eternal justice. It recognises man as a reasonable being, capable of moral and political wisdom. It recognises the people as its maker, and appeals to their understanding, their virtue, and their patriotism for support. It dispenses alike unto all equal rights, and equal privileges. It acknowledges man as he should be, *his own master*, and not the *creature*, of a lawless tyrant, or a bewildered King. In fine, it exhibits human nature in her noblest estate, and may justly be denominated the bulwark of religious, and political freedom.

Under the benign influence of this constitution, confusion was reduced to order, and jealousy and discontent were exiled from the land. Agriculture and commerce soon opened the great channels of wealth, and plenty every where crowned the labours of industry. Genius too awoke, and illumined the regions of

the west. America seemed the garden of Eden, the paradise of man. But the destroyer came.

A series of injuries and aggressions beyond our control again involved us in a war with our *old oppressor*. We have just emerged from that war; and the result has proved, that we are not an unworthy offspring of patriot fathers. The holy flame of the revolution was again rekindled, and we are now reposing on the laurels, won by our gallant countrymen on ocean, and on land. Their achievements have given lasting renown to our national character, and will reflect eternal lustre on the American arms.— Victory after victory have perched on the American standard, and broken that charm for invincibility, which has hitherto presided over the British flag, and given it vast dominion. To be known as an American citizen is *every where* a passport to fame. The empires of the old world are lost in the bright effulgence, which now encircles happy Columbia.

What adequate honours then, can we pay to the memory of those, who have thus contributed, with their blood, to their country's greatness? Ever honoured be the memories of PIKE, COVINGTON, LAWRENCE, BACKUS, GIBSON, WOOD, BURROWS, ALLEN, BLAKELY, and the patriot host, who have fallen! Wreaths of immortal glory encircle their tombs.

Departed shades! All the honours due to the heroes, who fell in the war of the revolution, are yours! What more can we say?

To the living, who shared in the toils and perils of this glorious contest, are due the rewards of a grateful country. To them also belong all the honours due to those, who have fallen. We cannot say more.

A *sense of duty* here compels me to allude to the melancholy fact, that in this *last*, as well as in our *first* struggle with Britain, we have had to contend, not only with an *external*, but an *internal* foe. Portentous meteors appeared in our political firmament, and for a time, excited the attention, and almost awakened the fears of the friends to the union, and our republican government. *Almost* had the demon of faction erected her standard, and unloosed the bloodhounds of civil war.

It was not enough to embarrass, and defeat the operations of government. More was to be done.—The union was to be severed, and “the nation of New England” to be formed. It was said, and published to the world, that “New England ought to withhold her resources from the government; that the union was *once*, but had *now* ceased to be a blessing; that the constitution was virtually destroyed, and the people of this commonwealth absolved from their allegiance; that for New England to sever herself from the union, and make a separate peace with the enemy, would be a wise and manly course.”*

Great God! Is this reality? Can it be we live in an age like this? Can it be, that within sight of yonder faithful and sublime monitor, sentiments like these should be cherished? Let man weep at man’s debasement. It is reality! *Discord*, holding in her bosom a dagger, destined to give a *deadly thrust* at the union, and the constitution, *was cherished*; and melancholy to relate, Faneuil Hall was her cradle!

* See a series of numbers, published in the *Columbian Centinel* near the close of the year 1814, under the signature of “The Crisis.”

Sentiments like these, too, came out in debate, in the legislature of this commonwealth, preparatory to the organization of that self styled “illustrious body,” the Hartford Convention. In the publications of the day, we were gravely informed, that “the *first* New England Convention met at Hartford, Connecticut, December, 15th, 1814;” and, at least, for the *honour* of our country, let us devoutly hope, it may be the *last*. The object, design, and doings of the Conventionists, I need not attempt to describe, and perhaps little need be said of their *final end*. The God of our fathers here, again, interposed for our beloved country. The herald of peace broke upon their startled ear. To them, it seemed the herald of everlasting woe, the bursting of the phials of divine wrath. The ghosts of departed heroes sprang up before them; the cries of an injured country on all sides beset them; “all pale and ghastly,” they shrunk affrighted to their caverns, and left the genius of Columbia sounding the trump of her fame.

Gladly would I throw a mantle over this part of our country’s history. To forgive is a divine precept of christian charity. Should it ere long repent the actors in this ill-fated scene, I trust, that Heaven and their own country will yet forgive them. But while the demon of party shall be *thus* deeply rooted in our land, this should be preserved, a living monument of the folly and wickedness of factious violence, and disappointed ambition.

Peace now smiles on our country, and plenty abounds throughout our land. Columbia now moves

majestically on to the attainment of the grand destinies, which await her. To guard well our constitution, to cherish those objects, which tend to strengthen the government, promote the solid happiness and independence of the country, and accelerate her march to greatness, should engage the attention of every portion of the community.

Here the delightful field of the husbandman first presents itself to our view. With him, let us measure the riches of the earth, and admire the beauties of nature. Agriculture is among the first, as well as the most honourable employments of man. It is the source of wealth, a fountain of virtue, a main pillar of nations. It promotes industry, corrects vice, and opens a boundless field for the displays of a philosophic mind. The earth is the store-house of creation, an inexhaustible mine, whence the hand of industry can always be supplied. With the hoe and the spade, even the beggar can find riches. How peculiarly pleasant and inviting, then, do the cheapness and fertility of our soil, render the employment of the husbandman. The gentle labours of the day give him health and vigour, “the hum of the evening” reclines him on the bed of repose, and “the carols of the morning” again awaken him to the invigorating toils of day.

Education is another goodly pillar of a free government. It develops the inmost recesses of the mind, kindles up the social affections, and exhibits all the virtues of the heart. It acquaints us with the history of past ages, opens the door of futurity, bursts asunder the fetters of ignorance, and expands the powers

of reason. It is only with a brave, virtuous, and an enlightened people, that liberty delights to dwell.— Do you, then, value the privileges of freemen? And would you transmit them to future ages? Extend the means of information, cherish schools of virtue, and seminaries of learning.

Manufactures also promote a nation's wealth, as well as its independence. A nation cannot be truly independent, that is clothed in foreign garments. The privations and exactions, incident to such a state of dependence, partake in a greater, or less degree of servitude. A nation, thus situated, cannot always make a manful resistance to aggressions. Dependent in so essential a particular, the dictates of self-preservation might compel her to yield to the will of her oppressor. A wise and enlightened government, therefore, will give liberal aid to the rising state of manufactures. Their growth and improvement in our country, within the last few years, furnish abundant cause for national gratulations. Already our flocks cover our mountains, and the spindle and the loom gladden the remotest parts of our country; and the period seems not far distant, when America may be clad from the fleeces of her own flocks.

Our commerce again spreads her canvass to the winds, and freights every sea. She associates us with the remotest regions of the earth, extends the progress of the arts and sciences, and contributes largely to national improvement and greatness.

The present is a favorable period, not only for the enlargement of our resources, but for internal improvement. Experience, the best instructor of indi-

viduals, as well as of nations, has proved to us, the mutual dependence of the different sections of the union, and the destructive consequences, which would attend a separation. Our attention should, of course, be directed to means, tending to facilitate intercourse, assimilate the various parts of the country, and strengthen the bonds of union. Bridges, roads, and canals contribute in a great degree to these desirable objects. The restrictions and privations, attending the late war, afforded salutary lessons on this subject, which, it is to be hoped, are deeply impressed on the nation.

While on this subject, let us pause and drop a tear at the tomb of our distinguished countryman, FULTON. The efforts of his splendid genius were constantly directed to objects of national utility. To him are we indebted, for many of our most important inventions and improvements. His philosophic mind subdued the winds, and the waves, extended the means of internal navigation, and introduced a new era in the science of naval warfare. Columbia will never cease to remember, with gratitude, his labors, and mourn his early end.

We live in an age, big with revolutions and momentous changes. We have seen one of the most splendid empires of the old world, once, and again overturned, and the "*ancient order of things*," ignorance, tyranny, and superstition, established on its ruins. The regions of the north have again sent forth their legions, and Gothic darkness again threatens the fairest portion of the earth. But the scene has not closed, the curtain is not drawn; the peace of

Europe is not *yet* settled on a permanent basis. Governments, established and supported at the point of the bayonet, are illegitimate, and cannot be lasting. To be permanent, they must issue from the only legitimate fountain, the people's will. A solemn silence, at present, pervades the scene; but may it not be presumed, that the seeds of revolution are already sown, which will ere long burst forth in awful grandeur, and break up the throne of ignorance and superstition, and establish the empire of reason, and the rights of man?

Happily for America, she is far removed from the theatre of contention and slaughter. But experience has taught us that we are not *wholly* exempt from the calamities incident to other nations. It has also taught us, that "peace is the time to prepare for war."—Our numerous population, and vast extent of frontier; the embarrassments attending the commencement of the late war, and the moral certainty, that we shall be subject to future, will not fail to impress on the nation, the necessity of maintaining and fostering, a moderate, but *efficient*, military establishment.

But in a navy, lie our great strength and safety, against the assaults of a foreign invader. Our country abounds with materials and men, and the finger of Heaven seems to have pointed America to a navy, as her helmet and shield. Already have its successes excited the admiration of surrounding nations, and "made a lasting impressien on their fears." Its increase, however, should be gradual, and advance only with the resources of the nation.

It is essential to the preservation of our liberties, that we should guard well our elective franchise; that no man should be elected to an important station, whose feelings and attachments, whose *whole soul* is not purely American. The time has not long since elapsed, when our country was contending with a powerful and vindictive enemy, and needed the united energies of all her citizens. It is one of the blessings of that glorious contest, that it has stamped the character of our citizens, and distinguished the *real*, from the *sham*, patriot. Cast your eye back to that period, and see who was *for*, and who *against* his country. Should you discover any, who constantly aimed to embarrass the government, and compel them to accept peace at the mercy of the enemy; any, who said the constitution was virtually destroyed, and New-England ought to sever from the union; any, who wished for the destruction of our armies, and rejoiced at their disasters; any, who would have purchased individual safety, at the expense of the means of national defence; any, who said it was "unbecoming a moral man to rejoice at our victories;" any, whose fancies lighted up a smile at the capture and destruction of Washington; or even any, who were alike indifferent to victory, or defeat; to such men, Oh! I beseech you, never to commit the destinies of your country.

On this occasion, it peculiarly becomes us to turn our attention, for a moment, to the situation of the people of South America. Their cause ought to excite our sympathies, and best feelings, for they are

now, as we once were, making a mighty effort for the attainment of liberty. It is a struggle between the friends, and the enemies of freedom; and the world has never witnessed a more cruel war, than is now raging in that delightful country. The cause of humanity, as well as of civil and religious liberty, requires, that some nation should espouse their cause, and put an end to their calamities. Whether, or not, it shall be expedient for the United States to act this magnanimous part, the wisdom, generosity, and sound policy of the nation, may perhaps have occasion to determine. It would doubtless be for our interest, as well as security, that the new world should be wholly free from the dominion of the old. And let us, at least, cherish the hope, that ere long we may hail South America, as a sister republic, a nation of freemen.

We should not omit, at this time, to pay a tribute of respect to the distinguished virtues of the chief magistrate of the nation. A useful life has been devoted to the service of his country, and his political labours are about drawing to a close. The period of his Presidency has been fraught with momentous events: A nation's destinies were committed to his charge. Her rights should be acknowledged, her wrongs redressed. Negotiation failed to accomplish these ends.—The last resort of nations only was left. Manfully, he adopted it. He recommended the war. External violence, and internal hydras assailed him; but like a rock in the midst of a raging ocean, unmoved, he stood; and thanks to heaven, has now the proud satisfaction to see his country triumphant over all her

enemies. His virtues shall be inscribed upon our hearts in characters, never to be obliterated, and posterity will give him rank with the most illustrious benefactors of his country.

Columbia, land of the free, and soil of the brave. Nations have felt thy power, the earth knows thy goodness. Before thee, kings shall bow, and the pride of the mighty be laid low. Kingdoms shall rejoice at thy praise, and empires shall tremble at thy displeasure. Forever shalt thou be the favourite abode of liberty, and the asylum of persecuted man.