

AN  
O R A T I O N

DELIVERED ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1804,

AT ST. PETER'S CHURCH

IN

SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS :

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE

I N D E P E N D E N C E

OF THE

UNITED STATES.

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By JOHN PICKERING, JUN.

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"If to please the People, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterwards defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and the HONEST can repair: 'The event is in the hand of God.'"

WASHINGTON.



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SALEM:  
PRINTED BY JOSHUA CUSHING.  
1804.

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AT a large meeting of the FEDERAL REPUBLICANS of Salem, hold-  
en at Concert-Hall on the 4th of July, 1804, It was UNANIMOUSLY  
voted, That the thanks of this meeting be presented to Mr. JOHN  
PICKERING, jun. for the excellent oration, which he has this day  
delivered at the solicitation of their Committee of Arrangements, com-  
memorating the Independence of the United States of America, and  
many highly interesting and important events which have since taken  
place; and that he be requested to furnish a copy for the press.

VOTED ALSO, That the Committee of Arrangements wait on Mr.  
Pickering for the purpose of carrying the foregoing vote into effect.

B. PICKMAN, jun.

Chairman of said Committee.

WM. GRAY, jun.

President of said Meeting.

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SALEM, July 5, 1804.

SIR,

The request communicated to me this day by the Committee of Ar-  
rangements, is received with that satisfaction, which the approbation of  
respectable fellow-citizens ought to inspire. I submit the performance,  
with diffidence, to publication.

I have the honour to be,

very respectfully,

Your obedient and humble servant,

JOHN PICKERING, jun.

Hon. B. PICKMAN, jun.

Chairman of the Federal Committee of }  
Arrangements, &c.

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AN  
O R A T I O N.

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**T**HE celebration of this day, fellow-citizens, which originated in the ardent feelings of our fathers, has now obtained the sanction of established usage. We shall not, however, commemorate the birth of our nation from a mere ceremonious compliance with custom : But it may be useful on this anniversary, while we notice its origin, to consider the principles of our Independence, and the consequences expected to result from it. And, would to God ! the recollection could justly excite in our bosoms, that honest and lively enthusiasm, which the delightful prospect of a great, free, and permanently happy people, inspired in the founders of our nation. They beheld nothing but the welfare and liberty of their posterity for ages ; while (melancholy reverse !) we, their immediate offspring,

spring, are doomed to anxious fears for the safety of our union, our freedom, and our happiness.

THE patriots of our Revolution, born under an English constitution and English laws, duly appreciated the rights which that constitution and those laws secured to the people. They saw the subjects of other sovereigns, bowing their necks under the oppressive weight of absolute power; while *they*, in a peculiar manner, enjoyed liberty. With liberty for their birth-right, with the great examples of illustrious ancestors resisting and controlling the inordinate ambition and tyrannic sway of their rulers, it was to have been expected, that they would guard with vigilant circumspection and heroic zeal, a blessing almost exclusively their own. Their jealous spirit manifested itself on every appearance of an invasion of their rights: And that spirit, when by repeated irritations it was at length inflamed, neither soothing palliatives could assuage, nor the severest operations subdue; it bore down all opposition, and produced that distinguished epoch which we now commemorate.

THE independence of the United States, was an  
event

event of extraordinary brilliancy. When we consider the wealth and power of Great Britain, and the poverty and weakness of the Colonies, we are astonished, that a war conducted on terms so unequal, should result, not only in concessions to the feebler party, but in their absolute independence.

It will not at this day be questioned, that the Colonies were warranted in resisting the claims of the Mother-Country, as well by the principles of the English Constitution (equally the inheritance of both,) as by their own invariable usages from the earliest periods. It was a fundamental principle of that constitution, that the subject could not be taxed without his consent. The Colonists believed this right, to be not only inherent in them as English subjects, but to have been recognized by their sovereigns in their charters and forms of government: And the violation of it by Great Britain, with the solemn parliamentary declaration, of her right to bind the colonies by her laws "in all cases whatsoever," produced that determined resistance, which issued in hostilities, and eventually, in our separation from the parent state.



I NEED not occupy your time in tracing the history of the war : The events of it are well known. It will be recollected by all, that it was conducted with various fortune ; oftener with defeats on our part, than with victories : So that at some periods, the most sanguine of our leaders were doubtful of a successful issue. But the perseverance of our countrymen, the extension of the war to France and Holland, and finally, the capture of a second army, determined Great Britain to relinquish the hopeless conflict, and to acknowledge that independence, which the spirit and firmness of our sages had early proclaimed, and which the courage of their co-patriots had maintained and established by their arms.

THE misery of the country at the conclusion of the war, can hardly be described. The morals of the people were tainted : Multitudes were reduced to poverty and distress : Public credit was annihilated ; and that, necessarily affected private engagements : The army was discharged without their stipulated pay ; and thus, a large body of men, incensed at the want of faith in those, for whose independence

dependence they had shed their blood and faced every danger, was dispersed over the country.

THESE causes of discontent existing, one principle alone was sufficient to bring them into action. That was of incalculable force: The right of the people to resist their rulers. This principle (which should be resorted to only in cases of extreme emergency,) was necessarily established as a practical rule of conduct in our Revolution; and having become familiar, ceased to be regarded with that awe, which the exercise of so dangerous but delicate a right should inspire.

THE united force of such causes could not be resisted. The people murmured, and in some instances, their discontents rose to open rebellion against the government of their own choice. The nation stood on the verge of anarchy; and the acquisitions of the revolution were put at hazard.

It was now discovered, that the most difficult task remained to be performed;—the rendering permanent that liberty, the preservation of which had been the direct object of the revolution. This

was to be accomplished only by an efficient union of the States. The collected wisdom of our patriots at length produced the bond of that union, the Federal Constitution. It was then, that our advance to prosperity became unexampled, and excited the most sanguine expectations. It was believed, that we had reached that ideal excellence of government, which excludes all infirmity in the rulers, and all vice in the subjects. We imagined that our government, though newly instituted, had the solidity of an old establishment; or rather, we hardly entertained the idea, that it was an experiment in politicks, and that its practicability could be ascertained by time and experience alone. We felt confident, that a system of government, which manifested so scrupulous a regard for the rights of the people, could never be exposed to the attempts of a popular faction.

LET us now inquire, how far these pleasing expectations have been realized.

FROM the establishment of the Federal government, there existed a party hostile to its principles. That party (which had been gradually gathering strength)



strength) profiting of the general and honest enthusiasm of our countrymen for the French Revolution, now more boldly raised its front in opposition to the government. Hitherto its influence had been too insignificant to excite alarm. It now organized Clubs in conformity with those of France, and propagated opinions, destructive of social order and directly tending to the overthrow of our government. The specious names of Liberty and the Rights of Man (names, which in their true acceptation must be dear to every friend of man,) were used as a mask to conceal the real object. The party arrogantly announced themselves as the exclusive friends of the people: All who did not join their standard, were the friends of tyrants, and conspirators against the rights of mankind. The people of America, still warm with the animosity which the Revolution had excited against England, and misled by delusive names, too easily listened to these captivating, but mischievous tales. And so far did the artifice succeed (under the patronage of the secret and authorized agents of the French Republick) in strengthening the party and creating a distrust of the Federal administration, that

that some of our citizens, in defiance of law, took up arms in the cause of France.

THE peace and safety of the nation, now imperiously demanded the firm interposition of the government, to counteract the insidious measures of France, and to restrain our own citizens within the just bounds of neutrality.—It is ever hazardous to the rulers of a free people to resist the current of popular opinion, and requires an intrepidity rarely to be met with. Such firmness, however, was then found in the Federal administration ; and to their inflexible patriotism we are perhaps at this moment indebted, for our existence as an independent nation. By their wisdom and energy, we were preserved from a war in alliance with Revolutionary France ; whose associations, under the guise of friendship and fraternity, have uniformly terminated, in the degrading dependence, base servitude, or political annihilation of the associated nations.

THE party however were not disconcerted by the resolute measures of the government : Discomfiture seemed only to animate their exertions. The  
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intemperate zeal of many of our countrymen (a zeal the more unwarrantable, as the several branches of government had concurred in a public declaration of Neutrality,) afforded a pretext to Great Britain, for committing aggressions on our Commerce. The extent of this injury demanded reparation. The Federal administration, with that circumspection which our neutral position required, instead of precipitately involving the country in a war, determined to open a negotiation with that power. On this, the clamours of faction were redoubled. We were told, with an affected tenderness for our honour and our liberty, that to negotiate with a nation, whom once we had reduced to our own terms, was disgrace; to treat with a *monarchy*, was treason against *republicks*; that even if a treaty agreeable to our wishes could be concluded, the perfidy of a *court* would be ready on every suggestion of interest or ambition to violate it. In fine, the administration was charged with partiality for monarchy, and enmity to republican principles.

By such inflammatory opinions, proclaimed the more boldly, the oftener their absurdity was exposed,

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ed, the publick were prepared to condemn any treaty that should be entered into with Great Britain. The administration, however, persevered with firmness, in defiance of the general clamour; and a friendly and commercial treaty was the result. Its reception in the United States had been anticipated: It was condemned in publick meetings in our principal towns; *in some, even without being read.*

How ill-founded these clamours were, your experience, my fellow citizens, can decide. I appeal to the commercial interest (whom this treaty chiefly concerned) to bear witness to its merits. And if we wish to make a comparative estimate of the faith of France and Great Britain, (in answer to the opposers of the Federal administration) let us take for an example the respective treaties of those nations with the United States, and inquire how they have been observed. From Great Britain we have received the stipulated compensations for her aggressions on our commerce; but from France, insult superadded to injury. From her we long fought for redress, without obtaining even a *promise* of indemnity: And when at length she condescended



scended to negotiate, millions of our just demands were the sacrifice.

THE discontents excited on the first intelligence of the treaty with Great Britain, did not subside on its ratification ; and the conduct of France increased the embarrassment of the government. She was pleased to take offence at the treaty, pretending that these new engagements of the United States, clashed with their former stipulations with her. These pretensions were supported by all *those means*, which that nation knows so well how to employ. In vengeance, her privateers were let loose upon our defenceless commerce ; the treaties between the two countries were violated ; obsolete regulations of trade were called into operation ; and our extensive commerce became a prey to the rapacity of her cruisers, and the injustice of her tribunals.

THE government, however, steadily adhering to its neutrality, patiently bore these injuries, and attempted to obtain redress by negotiation ; and it was not till repeated overtures for an amicable adjustment were repelled with indignity, that *other* measures were taken for the safety of the country.

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The views of France being too plain to be misunderstood, it became necessary to provide an Army and a Navy for our defence. When these measures, and others of a subordinate nature, were proposed, the party, who for so many years had displayed their hostility to the Federal government, sounded the alarm that our liberties were in danger. The cry of *standing armies*, so odious to Americans, rung through the Union. Constitutional and salutary laws, were stigmatized as acts of tyranny. A law authorizing the removal of dangerous *aliens* out of our territory, was denounced as an act hostile to the rights of *citizens*; while another, which made a new and liberal provision for the indemnity of all who should examine the conduct of public men, and promulge honest, though offensive *truths*, (and prohibited the publishing of *falsehoods* only,) was branded as a restraint upon the freedom of the press.

By such unremitting attacks, the government was at length undermined. The delusion spread in every part: The misled people withdrew their confidence from those patriots who had conducted them through the Revolution, and the fall of the Federal administration ensued.

ON its ruins arose the present order of things. Let us take a short view of it : We shall then see the height from which we have fallen.

To give security and permanency to the advantages acquired by the Revolution, the present Constitution was framed ; and many of you will remember the general joy and enthusiasm with which it was adopted. The subsequent organization of the general government—the establishment of an independent judiciary—the restoration of public credit by a just and productive system of finance—the creation of a Navy, and the forming of military arrangements as circumstances required—the prudent guards provided against an undue influence of foreign emigrants—and the general provisions for the good order, freedom and happiness of the people ;—seemed to have laid a secure foundation for the permanent enjoyment of all the blessings contemplated by the framers of the Constitution : And this foundation was laid by Federal hands.

Now, my respected fellow-citizens, cast your eyes on the state of things under the administration

nistration which has succeeded. See our union endangered by the acquisition of a territory so immense and remote, that the hand of government can with difficulty reach it; and admitting of a population, which, joined with that of the Western portion of the Union, must, in a short time, destroy that balance of power by which the federation of the original states was adjusted: See the Constitution violated by a stipulation inseparably connected with this acquisition.\* See its earlier violation in the invasion of the rights of the Judges: Consider the pernicious tendency of the precedent, to render those magistrates subservient to the views of the administration; at whose feet the next bold measure may lay them prostrate: Think, that with the loss of their independence, the judges will become  
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\* By the third article of the Louisiana Treaty it is stipulated, that "the inhabitants of the ceded territory [Louisiana] shall be incorporated in the union of the United States, and admitted, as soon as possible, according to the principles of the Federal Constitution, to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages and immunities of citizens of the United States."—It was uniformly asserted by the *Federal* members in Congress (and without contradiction on the part of Administration) that this stipulation was not warranted by the Constitution.

the mere creatures of the persons in power, and the instruments of their vengeance, against all who shall have the hardihood to oppose their march to despotism ; and, that their first victims will be the most enlightened, the most virtuous and the most inflexible patriots. Recollect other events of three short years, and view the rapid progress of corruption. Behold the able and experienced men of tried integrity, on whom for their services and sufferings in the Revolution, or for their personal worth, public offices had been bestowed—driven from their stations to make room for the devoted adherents of the reigning power ! Are not publick places and emoluments become the instruments of seduction, the bribes to corrupt the virtue of our citizens ? Is not the freedom of elections dangerously impaired ? Have we not seen the terror of removal from office, controlling the votes of some ; and the raised expectations of acquiring office, directing the votes of others ? Add to these sources of corruption, the public avowal, that candidates for office must possess *certain other* qualifications, than honesty, capacity, and fidelity to the Constitution ; and the corresponding practice ;—profligate men, foreign



reign adventurers as well as natives, patronised and rewarded. Call to mind the visions of Economy, which amused the imaginations of our flumbering countrymen, not yet awakened to see that they are but dreams. Behold certain and well established sources of revenue abandoned, and commerce loaded with additional burdens to supply the wants of our improvident rulers! See the Public Debt, which, while only the price of our independence, was a constant theme of reproach with popular declaimers, receiving at one stroke (and with the triumphant approbation of the same men) an increase of fifteen millions! And for an object too which we did not want, and which may cease to be ours before we shall have paid for it. Reflect on the Liberty of the Press: Time was, when we could freely speak and write our thoughts; needing no other shield than TRUTH. Now, TRUTH is no defence, if it expose the vices and misdeeds of men in power.—When we had no means of restraining the outrages of the Barbary Powers, capturing our ships and enslaving our countrymen; and when we had not even an armed boat to guard the commerce of our richest ports; the

Federal



Federal administration, gainst a constant stream of opposition, built a Navy adapted to our circumstances, and delivered it over in an efficient state to their successors. Yet this is the third year of a war miserably protracted with the most contemptible of those Powers! while our own coasts are insulted, and commerce at our very doors is abandoned to the depredations of armed vessels, licensed indeed, but equally piratical and contemptible with those of the petty African despot!

AGAIN advert to the Constitution, framed as we fondly hoped to endure for ages, and calculated to secure our union, and the blessings of liberty to posterity: See it already changed in one essential feature; under the pretence indeed of amending it; but in reality, for the purpose of securing to the dominant party a continuance of their ill-gotten power. A fatal precedent! an earnest, that further inroads will be made, as the views and interests of the party-leaders shall require; until the palladium of our freedom, shall become the mere instrument of a tyranny, the more conveniently and the more safely exercised, because it will be displayed in Constitutional forms.

ARE reflections like these, my respectable fellow-citizens, unsuitable to the occasion? Will they damp the accustomed joys of this anniversary? Would to God there were no cause! But we cannot escape danger by shutting our eyes against it. To remedy an evil, we must know it.

THE example of France furnishes useful lessons of instruction. The Revolution in that country doubtless originated with men of patriotic views. The sovereign himself was not the least ready to redress the grievances of his subjects. A free system of government was formed and ratified by the nation. But that country contained ambitious and unprincipled demagogues, who rejected no means of promoting their own advancement. On the first exercise of a constitutional right by the king, in refusing his sanction to iniquitous laws, those men spread the alarm, that the nation was in danger, and that the government had conspired against the people. They proclaimed themselves the only men worthy of the nation's confidence. Their outcries drowned the feeble voice of Reason: The infatuated people listened to their insidious suggestions; they deposed their king, in violation

violation of a solemn compact, and made his murderers their rulers. These rulers were soon supplanted by the same criminal means which had placed them in power. Faction after faction amused and deceived the people, and by turns deluged the country with blood; till at last, the distracted nation found solace for its miseries, in the arms of Despotism.

Thus perished the liberties of France! and thus will *our* liberties be destroyed, unless we make more effectual exertions for their preservation. It is time to avail ourselves of all the means yet left us under the Constitution, to defend our remaining rights, and to recover those we have lost. We should repel with scorn those fawning sycophants who have lulled us asleep, with the flattering tales of our virtue and our enlightened understandings. We should remember that the most *virtuous*, as well as the most *corrupt* nations, the most *enlightened*, as well as the most *uninformed*, have lost their liberty. We should learn, not less in publick, than in private life, to distrust those who are continually proclaiming their friendship for us. In a peculiar manner it behoves us to guard with vigilance,  
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*the Right of Election* : On the purity of elections depend our lives, our fortunes and our freedom. The corrupt exercise of this right in another country, has long been held up to our detestation : Will not a scrutiny into our own elections, expose us to similar reproach ? Neither must we shrink from elections, because in every case we cannot ensure a majority. Our political enemies, when a very minor party, never abated their zeal in a bad cause ; and shall we despair of a good one ? And if we should not eventually succeed, it will be honourable to have maintained a manly, virtuous struggle, when all that is dear to man is at stake.

SUCH vigilance and such efforts are required of us, by all the ties of nature and of social life. Our parents demand it of us, to ensure to them a calm repose in their declining years ; our wives and sisters, the brightest ornament of polished society, demand it of us, as the safeguard of their virtue ; and our children, that we should transmit to them unimpaired, the patrimony of our common ancestors.