

AN  
**ORATION,**

PRONOUNCED

5290

*July 4th, 1804,*

BEFORE THE CITIZENS OF THE TOWN OF

**Wintham.....[Maine]**

IN COMMEMORATION

OF THE

ANNIVERSARY OF

*American Independence.*

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BY JOSEPH POPE.

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*TO THE PUBLIC.*

THE following pages, which were written in a hurry, and designed only for one day's existence, are not calculated to stand the fiery ordeal of public criticism. The reader will find part of them but a simple narration of those facts, which every body is presumed to know.....and perhaps several instances wherein credit should have been given for borrowed phrases, which has been omitted:

AT the request of those to whom in particular they were addressed, they are submitted to a candid public, by

THE AUTHOR.



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*An Oration, &c.*

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*FELLOW-CITIZENS, FRIENDS, AMERICANS!*

YOU will not require of me an apology for my public appearance before you this day, nor will any be offered ; since it is by your request, together with an inclination of my own, suitably to notice the honor conferred on me, that I come forward to address you on an occasion so pleasing and important as the present.

FROM the first ages of society, there has ever been discoverable in the human mind, an ardent desire to perpetuate the memory of important events. The pencil of the painter, the chissel of the sculptor, and the pen of the historian, have ever been assiduously employed in transmitting to posterity the heroic deeds and achievements of their ancestors. But the more lasting remembrance of the events which

we this day celebrate, is had by frequently recurring to those motives and springs of action, which influenced the sons of Columbia to resist oppression, to shake off the bands of tyranny, and to declare themselves free. This day, fellow citizens, we gladly hail the anniversary return of the birth day of our country....that day which declared us, a free, sovereign and independent nation.

FROM the time the first emigrants were driven by persecution from their native shores, and sought an asylum for themselves and descendants in this western continent, till the declaration of American Independence, they were not only forced to combat the dangers attending them through the trackless main, and the perils and hazards which were ready to await them on this inhospitable coast, where they were surrounded by the wild savages of the wilderness....but were obliged to encounter additional grievances and burdens imposed on them by the vindictive malice of an overbearing, persecuting British ministry. The forms of government, whether by charter or otherwise, which were first instituted for the infant colo-

nies, were such as would have proved highly beneficial to the mother country, had she but permitted them the right of British subjects.... the unquestionable right of all free people.... that of having a voice in enacting their own laws.

THEIR reasonable quota of the public revenue, the colonies never withheld. Uncorrupted with the luxuries and vices of the old world, and credulous in believing that the proffered protection of the parent country was not merely nominal, they cheerfully contributed their aid in support of that empire of which they were proud to be considered a part. But lo ! the first tokens of her parental regard were but too deeply enstamped with the features of tyranny. The glory of the English name would have been their glory, had it not been tarnished by a disposition to enslave the young colonies, by extorting from them those rights and privileges, which are inseparable from a free people.... which have ever been deemed the birthright of Englishmen, and which the descendants of Englishmen would no sooner part with, than with their existence.

WE will admit that some favor and advantages might have been received by the colonies,

But were not these advantages reciprocal? England, in affording what little protection she did, at the same time protected a branch of her revenue. By clearing these coasts of the flags of other nations, she secured to herself the exclusive commerce of the colonies; obliging them to receive in exchange her merchandize, and hers only, at the exorbitant price she was pleased to put upon it. Repeated and exorbitant taxes were imposed, and hireling tax-gatherers stationed among them to retail the oppressions with which they were charged. Judges immediately dependent on the crown were appointed to administer justice; and troops were quartered among the English Americans, to enforce, if necessary, the execution of British laws.

THESE are but few of the multiplied grievances, which were heavily laid on the Americans, while their country was yet thinly inhabited.....Petitions and remonstrances were made to the King in parliament for redress, which were either intercepted by the cunning of his crafty Ministers, or if presented were utterly disregarded.....Such were the means used by the Americans of seeking redress, as evinced on

their part, an ardent desire that a good understanding might be maintained across the Atlantic.

BUT the haughty language of England was, they are founded by us, protectd by us, and inhabit our country—and with as much propriety she might have added, they must therefore be rifled of what little they have to augment our revenue, to pay our pensioners, and support us in all our ambitious projects. They wish to be independent of us ; it is for their interest—it is for their good, that we are severe with them, as one is severe with frantic children ;...as much as to say, it is for their interest to be slaves ; we are the best judges of their situation, and they shall be made to comply with our unjust requisitions. Power, which ought ever to be yoked with justice, was prostituted to the viler purposes of ambition ; and crown adherents seemed to vie with each other in devising means of rendering less tolerable the situation of our countrymen.

FOR non-compliance with unreasonable parliamentary exactions, or in other words for not suffering themselves to become willing slaves, the Americans had bestowed on them the harsh epithet of Rebels, and even declared

to be put out of the protection of the crown. The subjugation of the American provinces became then the object of English forces....our coasts were to be ravaged....our towns to be burnt....and people to be massacred....nothing but unconditional submission would retard the devastation ordained against the colonies. The great preparation making in the old world to enslave and destroy the new, extinguished all remains of affection for the original government. Shall we be free men, or slaves, was the question with the Americans ; and on the solution of that grand problem, depended their then present fate, and that of their numberless descendants. To be slaves, they scorned.... to be free men, they nobly dared....determining to vindicate their just pretensions to freedom, or seal the loss of it with their blood.

Thus was the way paved for the ever memorable events which were to ensue. The great drama, was opened by an attack on the capital town of our State. The harbor of Boston was shut, and all communication with the country interrupted. Instantly the whole extent of our coast became inspired with just indignation,



and the defence of their country is considered by all the States as a common cause. Electrified with resentment at the invasion of their dearest rights, they erect the standard of liberty, and pledge themselves to support it or die in the attempt. While British troops were annoying our coasts, and sending out detachments to plunder and destroy our villages, the Americans collecting to oppose their progress, became soldiers from necessity, and heroes by practice.....There is no legal government where a mutual confidence is wanting between those who command, and those who obey. The struggle now became universal. The cords which had before bound these States to the mother country were broken asunder, and a nation is at war with a nation....When the first musket discharged by England, was heard, America shuddered for the fate of her sons.... When the first blood of her citizens encrimsoned the plains of Lexington, nature proclaimed her free and independent. That the authority of Great-Britain over America should then have an end, seemed the joint deem of nature, necessity and time.....By the laws of equilibrium which nature has every where established,

in the heavens as well as upon the earth, by the laws of bodies and of distances, America would only belong to itself.

At this important crisis there was no time for deliberation...the immediate exertions of our countrymen were demanded...the din of war was heard through the extent of our coasts, and havoc and devastation were fast spreading into the interior...unprepared to meet so formidable an enemy, the Americans, few in number, and undisciplined in war, were driven almost to the verge of despair, and liberty was about to become an exile. Then it was, that the delegates of the several states assembled in the first Congress, were impressed with the necessity and importance of raising and supporting an army, and choosing a commander to direct its operations...but where shall they find a personage to head the newly raised forces, or, who shall undertake in so arduous an enterprize. Mark! the voice of some prophetic spirit proclaims a political saviour to his country. The wise men of the west, under the guidance of propitious fortune, are led in council to the appointment of the immortal WASHINGTON.....The name of WASHINGTON

gives fresh vigor to the almost desponding Americans, and dampens the ardor of their haughty invaders. Forth steps the hero, clothed in all the majesty of his country's confidence, to ward off the blows which are aimed at her liberties.

THOUGH small his army compared with the hosts of his enemy, and poorly provided with the necessaries of war ; yet animated by his example, and fired with the zeal of liberty and love of country, what did they not achieve ? Trenton, Princetown and the plains of Monmouth, all bear witness to the glory of the American name.

VAIN would be the attempt, fellow-citizens, for me to recite to you the particulars of those battles and engagements, unparalleled in the history of nations, which immediately preceded our freedom and independence.

WHILE the contest which at first appeared so unequal was continuing for a long time in a state of equipoise, the guardian genius of America cast the weight of Justice into the scale of the oppressed, and caused her enemies to respect the rights and liberties of a nation born to be free.

THAT important declaration of July the fourth, seventeen hundred and seventy-six, was in the year seventeen hundred and eighty-three confirmed and acknowledged by the powers of Europe.....The political hemisphere was adorned with a new constellation....America rises in the scale of nations, eclipsing by her brightness, the glory of tyrants and despots of the East.

To the destructive ravages of war, succeed the mild occupations of peace; and on the broad basis of the people, we behold a new empire established.....He, whose arm, was in battle a host....whose military prowess made his own and his country's enemies to tremble, followed with the acclamations and plaudits of thousands whom he has freed, returns from the field to occupy the first office of trust and confidence under the new government. The glory of his wise administration will never be forgotten by his grateful countrymen.

AND is not then, the freedom of America a mere name? Do we enjoy the blessings of liberty, independent of foreign powers? Have we the privilege of appointing our own rulers and enacting our own laws? Are our civil

and religious immunities secured to us, and our persons and property free from unjustifiable invasion? Yes, fellow citizens, these are all pleasing realities. Where are the equal rights of man better defined and understood, than in these United States of America? And where are the exertions of the honest and industrious more liberally rewarded?...Free from the tortures of a wrack, and the horrors of a grim court of inquisition, we enjoy our rights unmolested; and each one worships his God after the dictates of his own conscience....Lords and proprietors of the soil we cultivate, which eludes not the tiller's toil, we sow in hope and reap the rich rewards of our hands....Here every citizen may quietly sit under his own vine and fig tree; and while he eats his bread with thankfulness, he may also drink his wine with a merry heart.....Those odious distinctions, which originate from the pride of nobility, and which are calculated to exalt a portion of mankind, to the degradation of the rest, are scarcely known among us....Liberty and Equality are the pass-word of an American; and inherent merit his only title to precedence....The rich vales of our country feed the marts of the

world, by inviting to our ports the flags of all nations....Commerce expands her sails; and on the bosom of the extended deep, float American ships, whose streamers claim a right among the legitimate powers of the ocean....In exchange for our produce, we have wafted to our shores the commodities and luxuries of all nations on the globe: and long may it be the prime object of American policy, to encourage "commerce and free trade with all nations; entangling alliances with none."

To what a high pitch of prosperity and national importance have the United States attained!....The arts and sciences are here carried to a degree of perfection that might in some instances entitle America to dispute the palm with older nations. The names of WASHINGTON, FRANKLIN, ADAMS, and HANCOCK, will ever rank high on the scale of merit and philosophy, and excite the wonder and admiration of future ages.

FROM the numerous institutions for education and general improvement in our country, the youth early initiated in the principles of freedom and independence, and taught to respect the government and laws, become able

supporters and defenders of their rights, and qualified in turn to fill the stations of their fathers.

THE increase of population is rapid ; and as each successive generation has the advantage of the discoveries and improvements of the preceding, we may rationally conclude that the time will come, when the yet uncultivated wilds of America shall witness the pleasures of civilized society, and the remotest part of our extensive territory be made to administer to the general happiness of mankind.

THE United States of America, fortified within by a powerful and independent yeomanry ; with an increasing navy to guard their coasts, and protect their commerce, may, so long as they continue united, bid defiance to the combined powers of the world. “ United we stand, divided we fall.” The maxim, tho’ common, is yet full of import, and ought never to be forgotten. He who was our first in arms, our chief in battle, and in peace our political father and friend, most earnestly recommended its frequent consideration...It is the polar star of our liberties ; the point on which hangs our freedom and independence. Local distinctions,

party names, and prejudices, when admitted and indulged in a free government, will gradually undermine the fabric, and prepare the way for civil discord and insurrection.

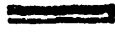
**GREATLY** is it to be regretted, fellow citizens, that such evils have crept into our federal government... That a mere contest of opinion should embitter the minds of one part of our citizens against the other part... veiling from sight the proffered good in our reach, and making us virtually to reject that happiness, as a nation, which the God of nature seems to have designed us. Our country invites us largely to partake of the rich gifts of nature, whose carpet is annually spread with plenty.... offering for cultivation an exuberant soil, replete with materials for the improvement and embellishment of art.

**THE** blessings of society and social intercourse which we here enjoy, and without which earth would scarce be habitable or life pleasing, we should endeavor to cherish and strive to maintain. As a mutual interchange of kind offices among inhabitants of the same vicinity, forms a social cement, by which every citizen becomes a participant in the good or ill.



fortune of all...in like manner, the prosperity and happiness of each state in the union depends on that mutual guaranty whereby each one is protected by the united power of the whole.

Those patriots who died in effecting the security of our liberties, had they now the power of addressing us, would be ready to exclaim...Americans! thousands are watching with pleasing expectation the dawning of a civil war in your country, when a collision and fermentation of opinion shall have broken those cords of affection, which have heretofore kept you together, and which seem now to be drawn to their utmost tension. The powers of Europe, which we have long since repulsed, will again come forward with bolder pretensions, and make reprisals for their former disappointment, if you but hold out to them the inviting prospect of a division among yourselves. If thus you gratify them, it was in vain we gave you freedom...in vain that we spilt our blood to attain it. Let us imagine, that they, tho' dead, are still speaking to us...and on this auspicious day, devoted to freedom's rites throughout our country, assemble in idea around the



tombs of those venerable warriors, and while we drop the tear of respect to the memory of their departed virtues, let us oppose every thought or sentiment favorable to a division among us, and resolve to maintain unimpaired, and transmit inviolate to posterity, the rights and privileges they have left us.

“ While foreign Empires spread their loud alarms,  
And rise, resplendent in the pomp of arms ;  
While wars and discords, bid the crimson gore,  
Swell in each vein and gush from every pore.”  
May Columbia stand, “ and frown away their rage,  
And shine the glory of each future age.”

O happy, thrice happy Americans, did they but sensibly realize and duly appreciate the value of those blessings and liberties they enjoy.

BUT while we are contemplating our peculiar advantages as a nation, and pleasingly survey our multiplied privileges, a regard for suffering humanity should excite our commiseration for those, who are yet dragging out a pitiful existence under the galling yoke of slavery, rendered more bitter by the lashes of a task-master.....Lo ! the poor African, torn from his native country, which is endeared to him by the fond recollection of kindred and friends,

bartered in mercenary traffick for sordid ore, and chained to life-long misery....and nations that style themselves civilized and christiani- zed, are first in this merchandize of human woe. Would to Heaven that America had been free from the stigma, and freedom's soil cultivated only by freedom's sons, and the slaves set at liberty under suitable government- al regulations, and rewarded in proportion to their services.....May the silent eulogium of their grief no longer implore in vain relief from misery. Where but in a free country shall the persecuted find protection? If America affords not an asylum to the wretched, where shall the traveller in the rugged path of persecution and distress, unlade his burden of woe.

TAKE a survey of modern Europe, and find if possible, a nation on whom liberty smiles. England with all her boasted pretensions, exhibits one half of her subjects in a state of vas- salage, dependent for the common necessaries of life, and almost for existence, on the capri- cious will of their Lords. If liberty is there she surely weeps.....Spain, cankered with the treasures of her mines, and groaning under the yoke of superstition, scarce knows the name

of liberty.....Portugal is a mere tenant at will of other surrounding nations ; small in extent as she is in power.....Holland, Poland, Switzerland and Italy, are but tattered remnants, torn in pieces by other powers....In Turkey, and in Russia, the arbitrary will of a despot is the supreme law of the land, and his own arm carries that law into execution.....Shall we search in France, regenerated France, and think there to find the celestial visitant. The ear is there saluted, with *vive la BUONAPARTE, vive la Republique*....while the chopping of the guillotine keeps time with their song, and the heads of her citizens bear tally to the strokes. Humanity shudders and shrieks ; liberty veils her face and flies. What heart is so steeled with apathy, as not to expand with joy and gratitude, when contrasting the happy situation of America with that of the most favored nation beside in the world. No fawning sycophant here dares shew his head, nor cringing suppliant begs for a tyrant's mercy. Ancient Greece and Rome, when at the summit of their grandeur, could never excite in the breast of a single citizen, those rapturous feelings which result from the conscious dignity of man, and which thrill the

heart of an American with the fervor freedom. The pledges of love and affection, which renders still more dear to us the acquisition of our independence, call into exercise the finest feelings of the soul..... Those of you, fellow-citizens, who bore an active part in the late wars of your country, how were your arms in battle nerved with fresh vigor, when the fond remembrance of husband and wife, parent and child, lover and friend, came rushing on your minds.... The fair daughters of Columbia, fearful of alarms, and tremblingly alive to all the anxieties of painful sensibility, looked up to you for protection,...that protection received, their smiles and caresses in peace reward you.

DAUGHTERS of Columbia! yours is the task to soften and civilize the affections of mankind, to sooth the afflicted and distressed with your tenderness and care, and make us sensible to all the tender charities of life.... Encircled in the arms of freedom and independence, may you ever find a pleasing employment in wreathing laurels around the brow of American liberty. While under your fostering care, childhood and youth, the germs of future greatness, shall re-

ceive those impressions lasting as their lives,  
which will eventually conduct them to glory  
and honor...and high on the pure top of free-  
dom's triumphant arch, which strides our con-  
tinent from Mexico to St. Lawrence, the Eagle  
shall sit and clap his wings for joy...and

While "the wheel of nature rolls,"

Or earth hangs balanced on her poles,

may the time never come in which it shall be  
said of these States, "they once were inde-  
pendent, they once were free."

Finis.

