

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED JULY 4, 1805,

AT THE REQUEST OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLICANS OF THE TOWN OF

CHARLESTOWN,

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

of

American Independence.

BY AARON HALL PUTNAM.

"Use liberty with moderation, lest it turn to licentiousness, which as it is a
"tyranny itself, so it usually occasions the corruption and conversion of a free state
"into monarchical tyranny."
SYDNEY.

CHARLESTOWN:

PRINTED BY SAMUEL ETHERIDGE.

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1805.

AT a meeting of the Federal Republicans of Charlestown, on the anniversary of Independence, 1805.

VOTED, That the Hon. JOSIAH BARTLETT, Messrs. OLIVER HOLDEN, and THATCHER GODDARD, be a Committee to wait on Mr. AARON H. PUTNAM, with the thanks of this Assembly, for his spirited and appropriate ORATION, delivered this day, and request a copy for the press.

Attest, EDWARD GOODWIN, Sec'y.

CHARLESTOWN, July 6, 1805.

GENTLEMEN,

I ACKNOWLEDGE with gratitude the indulgence, with which my fellow citizens have received the address of which they have done me the honour to request a copy, through a medium so respectable. It was not written with the intention or expectation of being made public. But having since understood that the feelings and sentiments I have expressed, have been misunderstood, or intentionally misrepresented as *antirepublican*, I am induced, with great diffidence, to submit it to publication. And again to request the candour and indulgence of my fellow citizens toward a performance, which will not bear the test of criticism.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

With great respect,

Your Obt. Humble Servant,

A. H. PUTNAM.

To the honourable Josiah Bartlett, Messrs. Oliver Holden, and Thatcher Goddard,
a Committee of the Federal Republicans of Charlestown.

ORATION.

WE are not now assembled, fellow citizens, with formal pomp, and feigned joy, to celebrate the coronation of an emperor, the inauguration of a first consul, or of a president for life. Those dark clouds, we hope, are not *yet* discernible upon our political horizon, even to the eagle eye of the politician. No, Americans, the grand national anniversary, which thousands of our countrymen, at this moment commemorate with festive joy, is infinitely more magnificent, more sublime, and soul inspiring. We now hail the great, the auspicious day of our first political existence, of our being as a nation. The day, when from yonder peninsula, the flag of united America was the first time unfurled, and triumphantly waved in the breeze; when, in the energetic and expressive language of freedom and independence, it was proclaimed to the exulting thousands, who stood around, and to the admiring world, that America was "*free, sovereign, and independent.*" The animating sound, was echoed and loudly reechoed with patriotic enthusiasm through our widely extended country. The far distant shores of Europe, reverberated; that "America was free, sovereign, and independent."

It is no uncommon thing, fellow citizens, that orators of the day, on this and similar occasions, in the language of declamation, pathetically describe our countrymen, before the revolution, groaning under the chains of slavery; oppressed and trampled upon by British tyranny. But is not this exaggeration? Is not the idea injurious to the manly character of our heroic ancestors? Is it true? Did they ever bow their necks to the yoke of tyranny? Were they trampled upon? Like the tame slaves of eastern despotism, did they ever cringe and groan under the lash of oppression? No, fellow citizens, Americans *never were*, we hope in heaven, *they never will be slaves*. We trust, they will never bow the knee, either to the British monarch, the imperial despot of France; or, fellow citizens, *to a domineering, tyrannical faction of our own country*. It was that noble "passion for independence," that vigilant jealousy of their rights and liberties, peculiar to them, which stimulated our brave countrymen, when those liberties were in danger, to throw off their allegiance, and dare the uplifted, gigantic arm of British power.

It has been in every age, probably always will be the case, that the mother country, will feel and act with suspicious jealousy toward their colonial possessions, when they observe them prosperous and flourishing, increasing in strength and opulence. They wish to continue the colonies in a state of minority and complete dependence. The spirit of enterprise is checked and cramped. Every attempt to enrich, strengthen or aggrandize themselves is frowned upon and opposed. And should the growing nation, feeling its importance, and impatient of restraint, discover

any symptoms of disaffection; the rod of maternal discipline is lifted over their heads, and they are stigmatized as rebels to parental authority and government.

Such, from the first settlement of the country, was the policy of Great Britain toward her American colonies. While in a state of almost helpless infancy, when threatened with imminent danger, she would interpose and protect them with the broad shield of her power, then at its zenith. Though frequently surrounded with horrors, without succour from the parent state, without the adequate means of defence; they were compelled, trusting in God and their own valour, to defend themselves from the sudden and ferocious incursions of the savage nations, which surrounded them. In these fierce and bloody encounters, they became inured to fatigue, danger and death itself, were familiar to them. They soon became hardy, brave, and experienced soldiers. And when afterward led to the combat against the veteran and disciplined troops of France, the most brilliant success attended their arms.

In the rare intervals of security, from the depredations of their savage neighbours and the invasions of foreign enemies, the colonists directed their attention to the natural resources of their adopted country. The spiritless slaves of despotism would have recoiled with horror, from the Herculean and perilous task, of clearing and cultivating the impenetrable, trackless forest, with which our country was at that period covered, in almost every direction. But with a spirit and energy, peculiarly characteristic of freemen, our hardy ancestors applied themselves with

successful industry to the cultivation of the soil. And before many years had elapsed, they were enabled to supply not only their own necessities, but to export the superfluity with commercial advantage and profit.

AVAILING themselves of the many natural advantages of the country, they began rapidly to rise in opulence and consequence. Then it was, that a spirit of watchful jealousy, and suspicion discovered itself in the councils and measures of the mother country toward the colonies.

THE British officers, who had commanded or taken the field, with the provincial troops, had marked and reported, not only their intrepid valour; but their fervent love of liberty, and their strong propensity for a republican form of government. The civil officers dependent on the crown, had more frequent occasion to observe, and to contend with this spirit of freedom.

It was early predicted by politicians, with fearful anxiety, that unless checked, as the colonies advanced in opulence and resources, they would become sensible of their strength and consequence; that when a favourable opportunity presented, they would aim at independence, throw off subjection to the mother country, and establish a republican form of government.

“THE political history of our country,” at this early period, continually represents to us the determined perseverance of the mother country, on the one hand, gradually to subjugate and reduce the colonies to subjection and dependence. On the other, we behold the spirit of freedom and independence, secretly and cautiously, but with firm and rapid step, advancing under the guise of defending “natural rights, and resisting royal oppression.” A continual series of ar-

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bitrary encroachments upon the liberties of the colonies, repelled by them with inflexible obstinacy, and manly opposition. We behold the menacing storm rapidly gathering, increasing in blackness, gleaming with portentous flashes, "when, at the attempt to tax without representation," it burst forth in thunder, and with convulsive violence, swept away all traces of colonial subjection and dependence.

I SHALL not dwell upon the interesting events of that momentous and soul trying period. Many of you, respected fathers and friends, have witnessed, have participated, the dangers, the horrors, and the glories of our revolutionary contest. All have heard these mighty deeds of "other times," described with all the fire and animation of patriotic eloquence. Or have listened to the tale of the patriot soldier, who, in the narration, felt the kindling spirit of '75, and "seemed again to fight the battles of his country."

I WILL not point to yonder heights, and paint to your imaginations the terrible conflict which opened the scene. I will not sound in your ears the thunder of battle, the shouts of the victors, and the groans of the dying.

I SHALL not, fellow citizens, recall to *your* minds, the remembrance of your town in flames, the shrieks of your affrighted wives and children, torn from each other, exiled from their native homes, and dependent on the sympathy of strangers. No, those dreadful deeds are past, and let us forget them.

You all are familiarly acquainted with the glorious termination of our revolutionary contest. A conclusion, which far exceeded the most sanguine hopes and the boldest calculations of its friends. Which

to have predicted, in its commencement, would have been ridiculed as visionary and quixotic.

You all do know, that our intrepid countrymen, undisciplined, almost unarmed, without resources, dared to encounter in battle the veteran troops of a nation, far famed from remote antiquity, for its valour and military prowess. That under the auspicious conduct of WASHINGTON, THE GREAT AND GOOD, these redoubtable champions of arbitrary power were held at bay, repulsed and vanquished. And, that finally, the haughty British monarch was compelled, unwillingly to declare, that the United States of America were "Free, sovereign, and independent."

Thus gloriously closed the grand drama of the American revolution. In what language, with what lofty figures of speech, with what triumphal strains, shall we attempt to eulogize the illustrious actors of those wonderful scenes? Ye, my countrymen, who were then on the "stage of action," who fearfully and anxiously witnessed the impending dangers, which, on every side, menaced the tottering fortunes of our country; ye will exclaim with the speaker, that neither the persuasive tongue of Cicero, nor the thundering eloquence of Demosthenes, could justly describe the patriotic enthusiasm, the undaunted valour, the fervent love of country, which, at that period, glowed in every American bosom, and irresistibly impelled them forward to the heroic achievements, which secured the independence of our country.

But Americans, to imitate the language of a hero, "In vain," have these our brave countrymen "toil-

ed, in vain, they fought, they bled in vain," if we their successors, degenerate from the spirit of *sincere patriotism*, and zealous attachment to *genuine liberty*, which inspired their bosoms and animated them to deeds of heroism. In vain have our patriotic sages, availing themselves of the collected wisdom and experience of ages, with more than Grecian or Roman skill, erected the noble structure of our national federal constitution. In vain, have they, with anxious care, laboured to intrench our liberties, within its *once* proud ramparts. If we tamely suffer this holy sanctuary and refuge of freedom, to be rudely assailed and subverted with more than Gothic rage and violence. Or with specious and false pretences to be gradually defaced, mutilated and weakened, till it can no longer afford us protection, no longer be considered as the Palladium of our liberties.

It would, Americans, be a subject of proud exultation, that ours was the only remaining republic on earth; did not the idea of our awful liability to share the sad fate of those which have fallen, damp our rising joy.

WHEN emancipated from a tyrannical government, mankind have, in almost every instance, vibrated with violence to the contrary extreme. Yet smarting with the recent scourge of oppression, and fired with implacable hatred to monarchy, their whole souls are intensely engrossed with the idea of the slavery they have escaped. The terrific form of despotism continually haunts their imaginations, and like a spectre stalks before them. Hardly will they, with jealous fear and timid caution, intrust the reins of government to those patriots, who have fought and bled in

the cause of freedom, whose sincerity they have never suspected. Misled by these strong impressions and prejudices, they unwarily adopt the political maxim, which the experience of ages has demonstrated to be false and pernicious; that a free government *must* necessarily be a *weak* government. Accordingly, constitutional barriers are cautiously erected on every side, almost solely, against the exercise and usurpation of the powers delegated to their rulers. They are watched with most scrutinizing and suspicious jealousy. The privilege of censuring, even of vilifying and defaming them, both in their public and private characters, is claimed, and indulged without restraint. Should any one of them, the real friend to his country, and to rational liberty, propose to increase the powers and energy of government, to enable it to support its dignity, to protect its friends, and repel the insults of audacious levellers and disorganizers, at once the alarm is given; tyrant, monarchist, enemy to the liberties of the people, resound on all sides; and he is no longer deemed worthy of suffrage or confidence. But we may safely appeal to the experience of all nations, from remote antiquity, to the present time, for the truth of the assertion. That more danger is to be apprehended to the liberties of a people, from their own unrestrained licentiousness, than from any other source whatever. Mankind are too corrupt, too licentious by nature, to be thus freed from restraint. To secure national happiness, peace, and prosperity, it is absolutely necessary, that the turbulent, impetuous spirit of *licentious* liberty, should be checked and curbed by wise laws; its nature explained by constitutional

definitions, its extent limited by constitutional barriers.

YES, fellow citizens, permit me to say it, mound should be raised on mound, "Alps piled on Alps," to shelter *genuine* liberty, and regular government, from the rude storms and tempests of this disorganizing licentiousness.

UNRESTRAINED liberty is but another name for anarchy. Anarchy, a monster more dreadful than the cruellest despotism. At his approach, government falls prostrate. The bonds of social order are dissolved. The wildest passions of human nature are freed from restraint, and rage without control. The altars of religion are overthrown, and her ministers butchered upon them. The profligate, idle and indigent plunder the industrious, and riot in the spoil. The wolves of mankind are let loose, to prey on the weak and defenceless, and gorge themselves with human blood. Devastation, confusion, rapine, fire and sword attend his furious course. "He rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm," against every thing regular, orderly and useful, every thing sacred, virtuous and honourable, every thing elegant, refined and polished.

AND yet, there have been, in all ages and countries, men stiling themselves patriots, and exclusive friends of the people, who invite the approach of this foe to God and man, call for the acclamations of the deluded multitude, and cry out LIBERTY! Yes, fellow citizens, this ferocious enemy, to order, to peace, to genuine freedom, and the real rights of man, is called, and ye have heard him called, LIBERTY!

The history of republics, in all ages, presents to us the same spectacle. We trace the same effects resulting from similar causes. In most instances, having by a bloody and arduous revolutionary struggle, liberated themselves from the chains of despotism. We then behold them, "in the full tide of experiment," with impetuous career, launch forth into the "tempestuous sea of liberty." We see them, tossing upon its wild waves, dashing against its hidden rocks, driven by the furious currents of faction in every direction; and at length, after struggling through scenes of confusion and horror, we leave them again, weary, weather beaten and indifferent to their fate, in the sullen, silent, dreary "calm of despotism." This is not exaggeration, not merely the language of declamation, it is reality, what has happened and probably always will happen. To realize this description, let us hastily survey the monumental ruins of ancient republics, of whom, "we can only say, they *once* flourished;" *now*, they are no more.

WHAT mighty power subverted the famous republics of Greece, united in a federal compact similar to our own; renowned for the wisdom of their sages, the patriotic valour of their citizens, and their ardent love of liberty? How fell the commercial republic of Carthage, opulent and powerful in resources? The mighty Roman republic, at whose name the whole world trembled, celebrated for her patriots, heroes, and statesmen? They were subverted by the furious convulsions of popular licentiousness. Artful and ambitious men, flattering the vanities and vices of the multitude, inflaming their passions against the estab-

lished government, rose on the storm of popular phrenzy to supreme power, and enslaved the people whom they had deluded with the "syren song" of liberty and equal rights.

THE same delusive arts, which enabled the parricides of ancient liberty, to overthrow these illustrious republics of old, have uniformly been adopted by the demagogues and false patriots of modern times.

IN England, not two centuries since, they were practised with most consummate address and complete success, by the arch demagogue Oliver Cromwell and his fanatical compeers.

THE history of England, at that period, presents to us the most interesting and awful scenes of sanguinary revolution and licentious disorder. Charles I. then on the throne of Great Britain, although amiable and exemplary in private and domestic life, was arbitrary and tyrannical in the administration of government. Royal and ecclesiastical oppression, roused in his subjects a latent spirit of freedom and manly opposition, which discovered itself in every part of the kingdom. But ambitious and designing men, uniting with the religious and political fanatics of that day, availing themselves of the opportunity, to accomplish their own sinister designs, blew up this spark of liberty to the raging flame of wild fanaticism and frantic licentiousness. They deposed their sovereign, imprisoned, and brought him to the scaffold. Monarchy and aristocracy were levelled with the earth, and trampled upon. Not content with the abolition of the ancient government, and furiously borne along with the phrenzy of mad innovation, they determined to abolish all government and subordination, to level all ranks and

distinctions, to equalize property and power, and introduce "the dominion of the saints." Then did England groan and agonize, under the most capricious and tyrannical oppression. When—Cromwell, the audacious conspirator, the vicegerent of faction, the profound dissembler, who had risen aloft, on the tumultuous waves of revolution; with one contemptuous nod, overturned the dominion of the saints, frustrated the wild schemes of the levellers, drove the independents from their seats, and with the appellation of Protector, ruled the British nation with more absolute, uncontrolled authority, than had ever been assumed by their legitimate monarchs.

Thus ended the tyranny of anarchy, in the tyranny of a single despot.

WHEN Charles II. was restored to the throne of his fathers, the British nation cordially welcomed him with the loudest acclamations of sincerest joy. And the reestablishment of monarchy and aristocracy, in all their former strength, was celebrated, as the most glorious, the most joyous era of British annals. And General Monk, who effected this revolution, was revered and beloved, like our great Washington, as the saviour of his country.

SUCH, and so great is the difference between the freedom consistent with regular government and good order, and that wild, licentious, tumultuous liberty, the watchword of demagogues, anarchists, and tyrants.—

THE frightful genius of the French revolution now rises before our eyes, reeking with human blood, and obtrudes his terrific form in our presence. The savage yells of liberty and equality, the shrieks and

groans of human victims immolated upon the altars of Gallic liberty, at once assail our ears.———But language and time would fail me, were I to proceed. Already is your indulgent attention fatigued with repetition. Already are you wearied with the attempt to describe scenes of tumult, horror and confusion.

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THE commencement, the progress, and the termination of the French revolution, have confirmed the fears of many cordial friends to liberty; and furnished still more plausible arguments to the advocates of despotism, in support of the opinion, that mankind are too corrupt, too imperfect and licentious, to be restrained by a republican government.

AMERICANS, we are now, under circumstances the most propitious for success, making the grand, the interesting, and probably the *last experiment*. Whether, a republican government, a government originating and emanating from the *people*, can be supported by them. Whether it be consistent with good order, tranquillity, national happiness and prosperity. Whether liberty be a vain chimera, an imaginary theory, which cannot be reduced to practice. A delusive phantom, in pursuit of which, mankind have waded through torrents of blood, and covered the earth with carnage and desolation.

It is an awful reflection, that we are the only surviving republic on earth. Where are the republics of Europe? On every side, the iron throne of despotism, is erected on the ruins of freedom. Toward us are directed the eyes of the whole world, awaiting the event in anxious suspense.

BUT are we secure, Americans, from the same

dangers, the same deceptions, which have overwhelmed other republics, in one common ruin?

HAVE we no ambitious, unprincipled men among us, who aspire to power? no pretended friends of the people, "hollowhearted patriots," who proclaim aloud their *love* of the people, their vigilance to assert and defend their rights and liberties? who declaim and rave against the restraint of laws, and of energetic government, denouncing them as tyrannical, and their supporters as traitors; with as much turbulence, and as much *sincerity*, as Cataline, Cesar and the other pretended friends of the people of old; as Cromwell, Robespierre, and his *imperial majesty* Napoleon I. of modern times?

Do we observe nothing of licentiousness, nothing of wild innovation, under the specious names of reform, "alteration, and amendment?" There are many who will answer in the affirmative. There are some, who fancy they already hear the roar of the revolutionary torrent, approaching us from the *South*, and threatening to overwhelm us. Who imagine they already see the flashes, and hear the distant thunder of the approaching storm. This will be ridiculed by others, as visionary, or stigmatized as gross misrepresentation.

WOULD to Heaven, this were merely illusion, that the event might be different, that no dark clouds now hung over our country!

BUT Americans, men of New England, if it be true, that our constitutional rights and privileges are in danger; if American liberty be doomed to perish, *here*, shall we witness her expiring agonies. Here, was her birth place. Here will be her grave; and ye,

her *first*, her favourite sons, will last bemoan her fate ;
the last to submit to despotism, *the last of republicans*.

But who, that fought for the Independence we this day celebrate, who, that inherits the magnanimous and intrepid spirit of our fathers, what true American, will be defrauded of his rights and liberties, by the delusive arts of political hypocrites ? Who will tamely submit to the tyranny of a single despot, or of a triumphant party ?

LET us hope, Americans, that the good sense of our countrymen, will enable them to descry the approaching danger, through the magical mists of deception ; that they will meet it with the intrepid spirit of '75 ; that when the appeal is made to arms, they will range themselves under the standard of law and liberty ; that the popular cry will be, *Long live the constitution, away with the traitor, who would tear asunder or deface this charter of our liberties !*

CITIZEN SOLDIERS,

WE applaud your patriotism, Soldiers, in selecting our national anniversary, for your first appearance in arms. We congratulate you, upon your disciplined, martial and splendid appearance ; your apparent unanimity, and your attachment to the REPUBLICAN feelings and principles of our heroic ancestors.

THIS morning, Soldiers, your footsteps have passed over the "green tombs" of our departed heroes. Your bright arms have glittered on those memorable heights, where our fathers once fought, with more

than Spartan valour, in the defence of freedom and their country. We believe, Soldiers, the remembrance awakened in your souls, whatever of patriotism, of martial spirit and intrepidity ye possess.

SHOULD foreign enemies invade our shores, or domestic usurpation threaten our liberties; may you emulate their fortitude and undaunted valour, in the cause of freedom and your country. Like them, may you disdain to submit to foreign or *domestic tyranny*. Like them, may you appeal to the "God of Battles," and die like FREEMEN, rather than live AS SLAVES!