

AN  
ORATION,

DELIVERED

AT

CANTERBURY,

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1802.

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By JEREMIAH REEVE, M. D.

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*Non est sapius in uno homine salus summa periclitanda  
reipublicæ.* CICERO.

*Ductores—primi—  
Confidium summis regni de rebus habebant;  
Quid facerent.*

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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*THE Author of the following pages, publishes them with a view to gratify those in this place, who were absent when they were delivered; and likewise many of his acquaintance in places where he has formerly resided.*

Canterbury, July—1802.





## AN ORATION.

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**D**EEPLY impressed with every sensation which exhilarates a patriotic breast, I would now, my fellow-citizens, congratulate you with the return of another anniversary of our national Independence. While all nature around us, appearing in its fullest bloom, and brightest beauties, adds a lustre to this happy day, surely it ought not to be disregarded by any true American. Most certainly, a day like this--- a day on which the patriots of '76, drew up those resolutions in which millions of our fellow-creatures are deeply interested, and perhaps will continue so, even through succeeding generations. I say, a day like this, will always be celebrated in some way or other, by every one whose breast glows with the least spark of patriotism or sensibility. When I consider that this subject has employed the pens and the tongues of so many writers and orators, far superior to myself, both in talents and eloquence, my spirits, dampned within me, recoil from an undertaking of this nature. But, when, on the other hand, I consider a theme so sublime as this,—so highly fraught with every thing animating, that even the meanest capacity in the contemplation of it, must be inspired with the most exalted views,—I have, \*on this occasion, ventured to address you upon a subject which can never be ex-

hausted.—What son of freedom, is there, who, upon the least reflection does not feel his heart dilate with gratitude to the great disposer of all things, who has in this age of the world, placed him in a country like this? A country, where the clime contributes every thing to the vigor and abilities of the youth of one sex, and to the health and beauty of the other :---- Where the inhabitants live far secluded from all the devastations of war, and horrors of blood-shed :---- Where “ every man may sit under his own vine and fig-tree, and there be none to molest, or make him afraid :---Where the people are ruled by mild and salutary laws ; and where each member of society, (whether ruler or subject) is equally governed and protected by the laws.. To set forth these our privileges in a clearer light, let us contrast them with some of the most important circumstances pertaining to our country from its first settlement. In doing this, we can better put an estimate upon them, and likewise pay a due regard to the unparalleled sufferings and fortitude of our ancestors in procuring them for their posterity. Here, I shall not presume to inform you on the subject ; but for the above-mentioned reasons, to give a short sketch of a few things relative to our nation in its present situation, I think will by no means be improper.

Our venerable forefathers, long afflicted, not only with every species of tyranny and political oppression, but compelled by all the torments that earth or hell could devise, to acknowledge a religion contrary to the dictates of reason, of revelation, and of their own consciencies ; at last were resolved to abandon their native land, and seek for refuge in the then uncultivated wilds of America. They accordingly embarked with their wives, their children, and some other effects, and committed themselves to the rude and boisterous ocean. Here, all the dangers of the sea were to them but the beginnings of sorrow. Suf-

face it to say, on this point that, "skies above, and gulphy seas below, were the sole objects of a many a day." And what but a christian fortitude could support our fathers when they had actually arrived at their long wished for land? Nothing met their sight but one extended shore, bounded on the one hand by dashing waves, and on the other by dreary forests of the howling wilderness. The place of their new residence, was an inhospitable land; a land,

"Where nothing dwelt but beasts of prey,

And men as fierce and wild as they."

But our fathers, with a magnanimity of spirit which inspires all noble souls, stemmed the dangers that awaited their perilous state, and with a cheerful resignation, and humble dependence on that God, in whom they trusted, surmounted every obstacle in their way, until they (or rather their descendants) were established in a state of tranquility, and enjoyed every privilege, both civil and religious.

But no sooner had our ancestors arrived to a considerable degree of national eminence and respectability, than usurpers of power, fostered in the bosom of our cruel mother country, were sent to make laws for them, and overrule them in their public transactions. This administration, however plausible it might appear in the first stages of it, was manifestly calculated in process of time, to involve the rising nation into a state of slavery and servile submission to a foreign power. Our fathers were early apprehensive that this would be the case; but *miserabile dictu*, they were in a defenceless state. Time would fail me to relate many things relative to our controversy with Great-Britain, previous to the declaration of Independence. Therefore, not to mention how assiduously our fathers frustrated the many deep concerted machinations formed against their liberties; not to mention with what firmness and loyalty they laid their complaints and remonstrances before the

British parliament ; not to mention the many abuses and taunting insults which the people suffered from an army stationed here to overawe the inhabitants, I hasten to the transactions of '76.

In the year of our Lord one thousand, seven hundred seventy and six, on the 4th of July, twenty six years ago, this day, our fathers, in Congress assembled, declared these colonies (then called) to be FREE and INDEPENDENT States.

If, since the origin of man, there was ever a period portentous to any nation under heaven, certainly this was one. For a comparatively small army, perfectly undisciplined, collected from a few colonies scattered along upon the eastern borders of this continent, more than twelve hundred miles ; to encounter not only the formidable thousands of Great-Britain, but perhaps all the combined powers of Europe, was something of almost inconceivable magnitude. Perhaps some may think that they were led on by a fatal phrenzy to their own destruction. It is not to be denied, that in those times that tried the hearts of men, there were many characters who, through an impetuous zeal, did some things rashly : but this was not the case with our chief rulers ; they proceeded maturely in their deliberations ; they were sensible that there was no alternative but for them or their posterity " to sacrifice their lives to freedom, or wear them out in servitude and chains." They were accordingly determined, like the firm oak in the fable, with their own strength to oppose the raging tempest ; and if they should ever yield to a superior force, not to cringe to the ground like the mean-spirited willow. With these views, and with these principles, our fathers, as a nation, encountered the hardships of a long and bloody war. And need I relate to you the whole train of disasters attending the war ? Only present to your affrighted

imaginations, desolated fields and plantations, laid waste by a ravaging enemy—whole cities wrapped in volumes of smok and flames—numberless widows throughout the union, weeping over their helpless orphans—breathless virgins struggling in the arms of more than brutal ravishers—wounded men writhing in expiring agonies, on the field of battle—dying prisoners, suffocated by the horrid stench of loathsome dungeons, groaning out their dear lives in galling chains—in short, every thing that fills the soul with terror and dismay. I say, imagine these things, and then you may form some ideas of those times in which the blackness of wild despair pervaded the nation. Ye respectable fathers of this assembly, I appeal to you whether you have not been witnesses to some, if not all of these things. Have you not often felt in your hearts alternate palpitations of hope and joy ? Of hope, when fortunate circumstances promised success to the union ; and of joy when peace was established on equitable terms.

Here permit me to observe, that the united supplications of the good people throughout the states, were jointly offered up to heaven for success to the commonwealth in those times of tribulation ; and who will deny that their prayers reached the throne of grace, and received answers of peace ? Let those consider this, who profanely profess to believe that piety and devotion is a chimera confined only to a few enthusiastic deluded people. Let them also seriously consider whether this supposed chimera does not, to their utter astonishment, prove to be an awful reality.

Here I must not omit to mention the illustrious Commander who valiantly presided over both the civil and military affairs of this nation, and safely guided it thro this unhappy war. Without exaggeration, it may be said, that WASHINGTON was under

the auspicious dispensations of heaven, raised up to be the protector, the deliverer, and the father of his country. But he is gone—forever gone. He now only lives in the dear remembrance of his country. Yet his name is left an honor to the page of history, and shall be transmitted to remotest posterity. O thou departed shade of our immortal hero! Almost three revolving years have scarcely suppressed the patriotic tears, shed for the loss of thee! Thou hast forsaken thy mourning country, involved in all the calamities of civil discord and confusion, to deplore thine absence. Ah! my fellow-citizens, we have much, alas, too much, to convince us that propitious heaven in mercy snatched him from this world, that he should not see the dangers that threaten his redeemed country. Do not the present times wear an alarming aspect? They certainly do. Satan, the common, the inveterate adversary of mankind, who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, has gone out into the world, he has many adherents, who may emphatically be stiled wolves in sheep's clothing. For proof of this, suppose yourselves in Europe; and there see how all things wear the marks of recent slaughter, bloodshed and conflagration. See how the ploughman turns up to view the bones of mighty warriors! Behold—France, that devoted country, for more than ten years, drenched in blood and tears! And must I be compelled to acknowledge, that even the wide Atlantic has not given bounds to this reign of terror? Yes, this Alectonian fiend, who spreads discontent and infernal rage among the nations, has, with horrid strides, passed three thousand miles across the ocean, and invaded these once peaceful and United States of America. Is it not so? if not, whence then all that bitterness that rankles in the bosoms of Americans, even in some within our own knowledge? Whence those intrigues to supplant those in office and places of public trust? Whence all those investives, ma-



lignantly vented forth by party-spirit? But I forbear. I must not allude to any denomination of politicians. This is not a time to cast reflections. This one thing we all know, that there is a spirit of great disunion existing among the states: disunion, my fellow-citizens, that cursed disunion, is the bane of all republics. If we, as a nation are divided, we must necessarily fall of our selves; but if united, there is no power on earth that can subdue us. Our Saviour, who spake as never man spake, said positively, that a kingdom divided against itself, cannot stand. And how does our own experience, and the experience of all ages, verify the truth of this assertion. Turn to the pages of antient history, and see by what means the republics of Greece, Rome, and many other renowned nations fell. It was almost universally by faction and disunion.

How sorrowful the thought, my fellow-citizens, that this commonwealth cannot, with propriety as formerly, lay claim to the appellation of United States. But shall this land ever become an asylum for despots and demagogues? God forbid! If that awful period should ever arrive, may it cease to be a country. Let it not remain to cast a blush upon the concave firmament. Let not the fair orb of the moon, when she rides in her midnight splendor thro this hemisphere, sicken at the execrable sight. But rather may the mountainous billows of the foaming ocean, breaking from their native bounds, o'erwhelm it beneath their briny waters; yea, may it become a receptacle for all the deadly monsters of the sea, rather than for monsters in human shape. But I quit the unpleasing theme. We are not yet that unhappy people, grouping in the dark labyrinths of anarchy and confusion, or mepaced with the horrid fetters of despotism and tyranny. We are yet a free and enlightened people; therefore, let us make the best improvement of our advantages; and tho we help to

form but one link in the great chain of society, let us act our parts well. If the blood of our fathers, shed in the defence of our liberties, should ever call down divine vengeance on the abusers of it, let it not cry against us. No, for heaven's sake, let no one of us be the instruments of entailing the curses of posterity on this generation.

Finally, my fellow-citizens, may that beneficent, that almighty Being, who not only presides over the contending kingdoms and empires of this world; but whose power exceeds the limits of the vast universe, may He graciously direct our public councils---give stability and integrity to our rulers---give to the people a spirit of political discernment, and due subordination to the laws---ward off impending dangers---long establish to us our national independence, and make us indeed that happy nation, whose God is the Lord.

