

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED

July 4, 1800,

AT THE

REQUEST OF THE INHABITANTS

OF THE

Town of Roxbury,

IN COMMEMORATION OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

by Luther Richardson

at Roxbury, July 4, 1800.

Quis est enim cui non possit liberatio, sed hinc spem, & hinc certamine
pari & soluta, cum laetitia, tum vero dulci atque jucundum. Cic.



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ROXBURY, JULY 4, 1800.

AT a meeting of the citizens of *Roxbury*, Voted, That
NEHEMIAH MUNROE, Dr. JOHN BARTLETT, and WILLIAM
H. SUMNER be a Committee to wait on Mr. LUTHER
RICHARDSON, return him thanks for the eloquent and
judicious Oration delivered this day, and request a copy for
the press

ROXBURY, JULY 4, 1800.

GENTLEMEN,

SOLICITING with candor on the perusal, which
was shewn at the delivery of the Oration, this day, I with dif-
fidence submit it to your disposal.

LUTHER RICHARDSON.

Messes MUNROE, BARTLETT, & SUMNER.



AN

ORATION.

CITIZENS AND FELLOW COUNTRYMEN!

A NEW era in the annals of time has commenced; tyranny has yielded the sceptre to patriotism; liberty, guided by reason, has began her bright career. Science has erected her temple on the grave of superstition; humanity has extracted the rancour from the bosom of war, and wrenched the sword of destruction from the arm of victory; commerce has subjected the ocean to the empire of man; and a new world beyond the limits of the old has arisen into view.

WE are assembled, not to pay the servile homage of adulation for the birth of kings and despots; not to pour forth the shouts of fanaticism for the triumphs of anarchy; nor to swell the guilty acclamations of a phrentic usurper—No, a more exalted theme inspires our minds. We celebrate that day, which freed a nation from tyranny, which gave a new empire to the world. A day, which declared the dignity of human na-

ruse, and the eternal rights of man ; a day, terrible to tyrants, but dear to freemen.

WHAT day can better unite all hearts ; what sentiments are more worthy to employ all minds ? Rise then, Soldiers, Citizens, Statesmen ! approach the altar of your independence, and recount the blessings of your arduous toils. Lead forth your tender offspring, and teach their youthful minds, to expand with sacred love of country. Let pleasure blow the trump of joy ; let shouts of patriotism burst from every tongue ; and pæans of exultation rise from every breast.

THE American revolution will forever stand, a grand epoch, in the political world. The faculties of human nature, and the rights of man were never till then thoroughly investigated. The art of legislation was brought back to reason, government was stripped of its mystery, and exposed to the eye of public scrutiny ; and “ it was found that for a nation to become free, it is sufficient that she wills it.”

THERE was no demon of anarchy, to spread the pestilence of civil war, to rule in solitude over the graves of his countrymen ; no phrenzied paricide, to bear in triumph the head of his father, streaming with blood from a guillotine, to testify his patriotism. Ambition never soared on the crimson wings of victory, to waft herself to empire. We boast no cities laid in ruins, to commemorate the downfall of government and relig-

ion ; no provinces desolated, to mark the flaming path of *Equality* ; no rivers choaked with the putrid carcases of murdered citizens. No, far different triumphs are ours. Calm reflection here performed the miracles of inspiration, and deliberate valor acquired the achievements of Gods. An empire happy, a mighty nation freed from tyranny. These are the glorious monuments of our revolution ; these are the immortal trophies of which we boast.

OUR fathers, persecuted and hunted from their native land, committed themselves to the bosom of the deep, choosing to associate with the monsters of the ocean, and to wander at large amid storms and tempests ; rather than sacrifice their religion and liberties to the inquisition of an inexorable tyrant. Guided by heaven to these solitary shores, nature received them with open arms, and joyfully pressed them to her rugged breast. By their toils and perseverance, by that virtue derived from pure religion, and that industry inspired by liberty, they rapidly increased to a degree of population and opulence, which commanded national respectability. With minds superior to revenge the ingratitude of the mother country, they still fondly hailed her by the endearing name of parent. Every tongue was loud in her praise, and every heart rejoiced to obey the commands of her patriot kings.

BY the sovereign aid of her colonics Great

Britain was exalted to a height of power, which threatened the liberties of mankind. Victory every where crowned her arms by land, and her navy rode triumphant over the seas. Europe trembled at the omnipotence of her sway ; Africa groaned under her mercenary iniquity ; Asia wore the chains of her monopolizing avarice ; and the whole world was too narrow for the boundaries of her ambition.

BUT the wealth of nations was insufficient to support the pomp and pageantry of a profligate court, and the cravings of ministerial rapacity. Jealous of a rising power, which he foreboded would soon set him at defiance, and adopting the narrow policy of his traitorous' counsellors, the king of Britain attempted to gratify the avarice of his favorites by oppressive extortions from his colonies. The perfidious design was concealed with all the art of hypocrisy and imposture. The powers of flattery and promises, of bribery* and seduction, were in vain exhausted, to ensure its success. Our rulers were too virtuous to barter their rights for gold ; too wise to be duped by the insidious professions of a treacherous cabinet ; and too resolute to be plundered by royal robbers. They reasoned, petitioned, remonstrated.

* JOSEPH REED, a member of Congress was offered a bribe of £,10,000, and any office in the colonies he might choose, by Gov. JOHNSTONE, to which he replied, " I am not worth purchasing ; but such as I am the King of Great Britain is not rich enough to do it." To the glory of our revolution, there was but one solitary instance of defection—but ~~the~~ *Arnold* to disgrace our country.

It was not the value of the demand, it was the right, which they contested. The commands of ministers became at length open and peremptory. Unconditional submission, or chastisement, was their insulting language. But America roused with just indignation; her flinty brow sparkled at the strokes of oppression, and kindled a holy flame of patriotism, which the engines of kings, and the slaves of tyrants, could never extinguish.

EUROPE beheld with astonishment an infant nation, unskilled in the detestable art of human slaughter, without the means of war or foreign aid, rise in defiance to the power of Britain. The forces of a mighty empire were called forth, to crush, and chain us. The fiery meteors of royal vengeance streamed through our atmosphere; the clouds of war gathered blackness, the tempest of battle burst over our heads—But America stood firm and undaunted, like the mighty Andes, whose towering tops rise in calm sublimity, mocking the fury of the angry elements.

SAY, ye hoary freemen, who are yet alive, what enrapturing love of posterity, what mighty fortitude, what divine enthusiasm, inspired your patriot souls, to appeal to heaven for the justice of your cause; to challenge the world in arms; and “to swear with one voice, to die freemen rather than to live slaves.”

WHERE shall I begin to relate a series of events, which to admiring nations appeared like miracles ! Shall I bring back to view “the times, which tried mens’ souls ?” Shall I present you our neighbouring capital, crowded with hostile foes ; her temples plundered, her altars polluted, and the peaceful ceremonies of religion driven from this holy sanctuary ? Shall I lead you to the heights of Bunker, amid torrents of conflagration, the thunders of battle, and the groans of the dying ? Shall I set before you our devoted country, trembling on the brink of annihilation ? On the East, a victorious army and an all powerful navy ravaged our sea coast. On the West, the savage cannibal forsook his native haunts, to spread devastation and carnage. Terror and despair assailed us in the South ; famine and pestilence broke in from the North—Inexorable Deity at length listened to the cries of expiring freedom. The God of liberty proclaimed aloud “ what men “ can do, has been already done ; I have found “ a patriot worthy to rule a nation of freemen.” A flood of glory burst from heaven, and encircled WASHINGTON. At the boldness of his achievements the ministers of Britain stood appalled, their monarch trembled on his throne, and despotism himself, blinded by the blaze of his fame, threw down his chains.

THE crimson morn of liberty was often obscured with clouds of misfortune. The object

of our revolution was but half completed by the acquisition of independence. Our bands of unity relaxed with our dangers. Mutual jealousy, party discord, and an alarming spirit of licentiousness, those inseparable evils of an excess of liberty, threatened to undermine the fair fabric of our freedom. The old confederation was found inadequate to the ends of government, and to regulate the new interests of commerce and foreign intercourse. Industry was paralyzed under an intolerable load of taxes, trade was shackled with exorbitant duties ; our finances disordered, and public credit ruined. The people felt the evils, and ignorant of the cause, became outrageous against their rulers. Anarchy reared her hydra head ; the high priests of faction blew the trumpet of rebellion ; and the vultures of civil war screamed for joy at the prospect of carnage.

BUT the weeping genius of liberty fled for refuge to the groves of Vernon. The father of his country, transported with parental love, flew to comfort, and save his despairing children. His presence, like order moving over the face of chaos, brought harmony out of confusion, confidence from despair. A new constitution was formed from the collected wisdom of American sages. A constitution, which unites the advantages of all former governments, without their evils ; a government as perfect, as the mind of

its chief author, and which, if maintained in its pure spirit, will be eternal as his glory.

EUROPE is doomed to perpetual discord and commotion. Diplomatic policy has spread its crafty net over all her cabinets, and bound them in eternal enmity. Impulse given to one, causes them all to vibrate. Reason, policy and humanity, protested against our taking any part in the present unnatural war. A neutral position was the dictate of prudence and wisdom. This enviable situation, by the firmness of our government, and the discretion of our chief magistrates, we have honorably maintained in defiance of foreign threats and domestic intrigue, in spite of royal plunderers and republican robbers.

THE present is an alarming crisis. We have triumphed over foreign enemies, but we have now, to contend with ourselves. We have to combat the powers of intrigue, that pestilence, which walketh in darkness; a spirit of disorganization, begotten by envy, and propagated by calumny, hypocrisy and atheism; which has applied the most captivating names to the worst of crimes. A doctrine, in which all subordination is denominated oppression; all government and law, despotism and tyranny. A new political philosophy, which renders its disciples all equal—equal in infamy, the scourges of mankind, the anti-Christ of rational liberty.

DOES any one doubt the pernicious effects of this wonderful philosophy? Let him turn his eyes to Europe, and behold her in all her terrors. There, she has raised herself a power, which like Aaron's serpent devours all others. There, by her influence deeds of horror have been committed, the bare relation of which would blister the tongue of savage cruelty; which would curdle the blood of cannibals! Thanks to the hero, who has arrested the monster in the midst of her triumphs, and chained her down to military despotism. But the marks of her ravages, like those of the deluge, will remain to latest posterity.

NEARLY all the evils, which convulse the world at the present day, have arisen from mistaken ideas of the rights of man. Too feeble to defend himself against surrounding dangers, and to gain subsistence alone, man enters the social compact for convenience and security. Yielding up his original independence, he voluntarily lays himself under the restraints of order, in return for protection and safety. Thus the embryo of society is begotten by government, and nourished on the bosom of subordination and law. Thus the popular doctrine of equality in a civilized state, founded on error, and propagated by ignorance, is a solecism in politics. Civil liberty does not consist in wandering at large over a barren wilderness; but in enjoying a cultivated garden, secure from the invasion of all others. It is not

marked by the unbounded limits of passion and will; but confined by the gentle restraints of doing whatever does not injure another. Hence, no society can exist without government, no liberty without obedience to laws; and experience demonstrates that "even the worst of governments is preferable to none at all."

CAN any true lover of his country reflect on the present situation of the world, the unnatural war, which has spread havoc and destruction in every quarter of the globe, the millions, which have fallen victims to its fury, the nations which have been swept away in its progress, without gratitude for the signal preservation of America? What nation on earth enjoys so high a degree of freedom and happiness? What government secures to its subjects their rights and liberties, like our own? Have we not a constitution of our own free choice; administered by men of our own election? Are not our rulers bound by the most solemn obligations of duty and conscience for the faithful discharge of their trusts? Are they not under the highest responsibility? Can they pursue any oppressive measure, which will not equally affect themselves? Will they not all return at the expiration of their offices, and mingle with the mass of citizens? Ought not our unexampled national prosperity, enjoyed under our present administration, to inspire public confidence? Is it not the highest demonstration of the

uprightness of our present political system? Have we not for our chief magistrate, a statesman, whose wisdom and fidelity command the veneration of mankind; whose patriotism is testified by a life devoted to your service; whose firm soul, to secure popular applause, never feared to execute the stern commands of justice; but whose mercy, repentant guilt never implored in vain?— Reflect on these truths, ye foreign exiles, ye fugitive impostures, who criminate every public measure from a pretence of republican jealousy; who view government and rulers through the distorting medium of your own prejudices; reflect, and tremble for your presumption. Contemptible miscreants! Suspicion and calumny are the deadly weapons, which you wield with nerves of malice. No rulers faithfully discharge their trust, they expect your abuse. But the rays of your vengeance, darted upon them, serve only to brighten, but cannot consume their merit.

AMERICANS,

WHEN we contemplate the vast extent of our country, the local advantages for commerce and agriculture, our national enterprize, the rapid increase of population and opulence, and the mighty empire to which we may possibly arrive, the mind, expanded with the vast idea, ought to feel a generosity of sentiment, superior to private prejudice, or party rancour, and to act worthy of



the important occasion. Our national existence is inseparably interwoven with our constitution. When this falls, it will bury our country in its ruins. The eyes of mankind are upon us. We are destined to demonstrate by experiment the grand political problem, whether pure Republicanism is a blessing, made for man. Europe has rejected her; the eastern continent is unworthy of her; America is her last, her only asylum. Should we cast her off, she would bid adieu to an ungrateful world, and return again to heaven. Our laws, our government, our religion, all demand our utmost exertion. The voice of posterity, the cries of unborn millions call upon us, to unite for the public good. Our country is threatened not from foreign invasion, but by domestic dissention. By inflaming party discord we precipitate her downfall. In vain we supported an age of toils; in vain we fought, and bled in the defence of freedom, if it is unworthy of preservation. Oh liberty—heavenly fugitive! dear to thy votaries only during the toils, the pangs, the agonies of thy birth. But when secured in peace, forsaken, persecuted, destroyed. Fatal inconsistency! Infatuated Americans! Once the glory and admiration of the world; but soon to become the sport of anarchy, a prey to civil dissention. Once the scourge and terror of despots, but soon to fall the victims of yourselves.—Ye grass-grown monuments of our revolution! Ye dear heights, who inhers within your bosoms the precious dust of

WARREN and his brave warriors, shall forever witness our disgrace! The indignant heroes, who fell in the cause of liberty, shall spring from their tombs, to brand their degenerated posterity with curses of infamy. From the high realms of bliss the fainted spirit of our departed father frowns with anger on his deluded children. The echo of each foot-step is the voice of his admonition; he sighs with every breeze, with every dew-drop he sheds an immortal tear.

BUT let us not too deeply shade the picture of future evils, nor overcharge the gloomy prospect of our dangers. Repentance of our political errors may delay them; reformation will prevent them. A cheerful support of our present administration will preserve the tottering fabric of our liberty; national unanimity will render it immortal.

COLUMBIAN fair! generous disposers of our happiness, and amiable protectors of our felicity. To you it belongs to rule the milder empire of virtue. Long continue, as at present, the watchful guardians of our morals; and by the persuasive mildness of your conversation, and the sovereign influence of your example, soothe party discord to friendship and unity. Remember, no heart can resist the voice of patriotism, when urged by the lips of beauty and innocence.

AMERICANS, the close of the eighteenth century will be commemorative of the most distressful events. Our orphan state had not unveiled her mournful face for the loss of her patriot SUMNER, before she was summoned with all America to that agonizing event, which made "a nation fatherless, a world in tears." Ah! how different is this from our former anniversaries. The shouts, which always spoke a nation's joy, are now drowned by a nation's sighs. Afflicted countrymen! check not your tears. To weep for WASHINGTON is filial gratitude; to grieve is manly virtue. Wonderful man! heroic warrior, immortal legislator, father of America, parent of the patriots of all nations, benefactor of mankind! the praises of the whole congregated world would be too small for thy virtues. Thy memory shall be cherished by all ages, thy fame shall expand with creation, thy veneration shall increase with time, thy glory shall be commensurate with eternity.

YE fainted patriots, who bore the toils of freedom; ye who gloriously fell in the field of battle, and ye, who expired in the arms of a weeping country, while ye celebrate this anniversary with new transports in the blissful courts of heaven for the presence of your illustrious chief, oh bow your immortal heads, to accept the blessings of your grateful country. Assembled before the altar of our independence, we all swear to defend those rights purchased by your toils; to obey the

last precepts of our great political father ; and to unite with zeal in the cause of God and our country.

IMAGINATION withdraws the curtain from futurity, and unfolds to our enrapturing view that joyful era, when the rising sun of glory shall arrive to its meridian splendor in this western hemisphere ; when the empire of America shall be unbounded, as her happiness ; when the deep rooted thrones of despotism shall crumble into ruin ; when thy temple, O Liberty, shall be the whole concave of heaven ; thy altar the hearts of all mankind ; when a new world shall emerge from the chaos of the old, and a new WASHINGTON, to render it happy.

