

AN
ORATION

PRONOUNCED

AT

HALLOWELL,

ON

THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1805,

IN

COMMEMORATION

OF

American Independence.

By E. W. RIPLEY.

PORTLAND:

FROM THE ARGUS-PRESS.....BY N. WILLIS, JUN.

1805.

HALLOWELL, July 5, 1805.

To E. W. RIPLEY, Esq.

SIR,

THE COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS
tender you their thanks for the candid and ingenious
ORATION, delivered at Hallowell, the 4th instant, and
request a copy for the Press.

SAMUEL TITCOMB,
THOMAS PITTS,
NATHANIEL CHEEVER.



HALLOWELL, July 6, 1805.

To the COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS,

GENTLEMEN,

I PRAY you to accept my acknowledgments
for the polite manner in which your request of a Copy of
my ORATION is conveyed, and although it was composed
without any impression of its future publication, yet I
submit it to your disposal.

I am, with the highest personal consideration,

Your ob't. & b'ble. serv't.

E. W. RIPLEY.

ORATION.

FATHERS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

A RECURRENCE of the anniversary of *American Independence*, excites in our bosoms the most interesting reflections. The mind, hurried back by a contemplation of it, to the period of the commencement of the Revolution, beholds in succession, those splendid achievements, which established our *Liberties* on the basis of natural rights, and attracted the applause and admiration of the world.

AT this important era, *Great-Britain* had assumed a commanding position among the nations which surrounded her. Just reposing from a contest, in which she had defeated the coalesced exertions of the *Bourbon family*, she vainly attempted at a more extensive domination. Possessing resources of almost incalculable magnitude, a Navy which had recently spread terror over the face of the deep, and an Army accustomed to the laurel of victory, led by Chiefs who ranked high in the rolls of military fame, she rested securely in the contemplation of her elevated situation. Little did she consider how soon the sun of glory was to descend from her meridian, to illuminate with increased resplendence the Western Hemisphere.

THE endeavors of the corrupt Cabinet of *St. James*, to impose shackles on the Freedom of the Colonies, and to deprive them of the most important

privileges annexed to the British Constitution, are facts well known to all. In vain we petitioned ; we remonstrated in vain. An abandoned Ministry were deaf to our entreaties, and rejected our most humble supplications with contemptuous disdain. At length, after reiterated attempts on our part to prevent the final appeal to arms, the injustice of *Great-Britain* threw down the gauntlet of defiance ; the Provinces were declared in a state of rebellion ; the blood of the Colonists had already streamed at *Lexington*, and the tempest of war over-shadowed our land.

THE situation of *America* at that period, was melancholy and unpromising. Without military resources, and unconnected by any common principle of combination ; destitute of leaders accustomed to the field of battle, and possessing only an *undisciplined Yeomanry*, we had no hope to repose on but the justice of our cause, and the benign interposition of an over-ruling Providence.

AND thanks be rendered to that GOD, “ who maketh darkness his pavilion,” and “ whose ways are unknown to the children of men.”—HE provided for us resources—HE inspired us with courage to meet the impending danger—and HE raised up to us potent and magnanimous allies, to aid by their exertion in the unequal warfare.

THE vicissitudes of this contest are fresh in the recollection of all. Many of you were *actors* in the illustrious drama, and defended with becoming energy the Liberties of your country. And those of us, whose

early years will not carry us back to the period of the eventful conflict, have often heard rehearsed the story of our Father's sufferings, 'till our bosoms have swelled with mingled emotions of admiration and resentment, of gratitude and revenge.

DURING the whole continuance of the contest, the prowess of *Americans* was pre-eminently conspicuous. On the memorable heights of *Bunker*, they made the first systematic resistance to the storm of *British* devastation, and taught our enemies this salutary lesson, that the advantages of discipline and military experience, were but feeble, when put in competition with the hardihood of *FREEMEN*. In subsequent encounters at *Saratoga*, at *Princeton*, at *Monmouth*, and at the *Eutaws*, our band of Heroes erected to itself monuments more durable than marble ; monuments, which are consecrated with the gratitude of their country, and the applause of an admiring world.

At length worn out with the accumulation of humiliating disasters, and after seeing its best armies either defeated or led in triumph, the *British Cabinet* was compelled to acknowledge our *Independence*, to withdraw its forces from our coasts, and leave us in the honorable possession of the *Rights*, for which we had so gallantly contended.

AND here, Fellow-Citizens, let us turn aside from the joyful hilarity of this day, to lament the fate of those Patriots, who fell in defence of the privileges we enjoy. WARREN and MONTGOMERY ; NASH, MERCER and SCAMMEL ! Though the untimely shaft of

death arrested your brilliant career, yet your fame shall survive to remotest posterity, as an example to animate the votaries of *FREEDOM*. Altho' you were long since numbered with the silent dead, your memories are embalmed in the affections of your countrymen, and the page of impartial history, has already taken charge of your glory.

NOTWITHSTANDING the ferocities of war had given place to the blessings of peace, the *dangers* of our beloved country were not over. The *Old Confederation*, uncemented by the presence of an invading foe, was soon found too feeble to preserve the Union of the States. This was a crisis of doubt and apprehension to the patriotic mind. Intestine division had already commenced its desolating career. Corroding jealousies were excited in different portions of the nation ; and it was seriously feared, that our Revolution would appear in the annals of time, a *political meteor*, just gleaming amid the darkness which overspread the world.

BUT here again, we have to acknowledge the kind interference of a *benignant Providence*, which collected in its Capital, the wisdom of our country, and led to the establishment of our happy *Constitution*.

THE provisions of this instrument are admirably calculated to advance the great ends of civil society. While on the one hand, it secures to the citizen the right of self-government, on the other, it protects him in his person and property, and prevents the dangers attendant on Anarchy. Establishing a toleration of

all Religious sentiments, it has put it beyond the power of fallible men to interfere with the *consciences* and *opinions* of others. To merit, in whatever situation it may be placed, it holds forth an excitement to perseverance in the cause of virtue. Creating no order of citizens superior to the rest, the path to honor and preferment is left perfectly uncontrouled. The high and the low, the rich and the poor, are equally the objects of its fostering care. Above all, its guarantee to each State of a *Republican form of Government*, renders it impracticable for aspiring men to change the situation of the individual members of the Union.

BUT this invaluable Constitution, with all its excellent provisions, is not alone sufficient to secure to us the Freedom and Prosperity of our Country. In order that this may be done effectually, it is necessary to commit the powers, delegated by it to the public functionaries, to men of *upright hearts* and *intelligent understandings*. And it is among the peculiar causes of congratulation on this solemn anniversary, that such are the qualifications of the persons, who now compose the Administration of the National Government.

Do we seek for evidence of the truth of this proposition? we shall find it in the various relations of American affairs. We shall discover it in the increased, and increasing prosperity of our Commerce; in the wise economy manifested in the management of our fiscal concerns; in the bloodless acquisition of an immense and fertile Territory; and in the unexampled diminution of our National embarrassments. But little is it necessary for me, on this occasion, to recount

the virtues of wise and Patriotic Statesmen. They are recorded in the affections of a grateful country ; and when the proud monuments which *Heroes* and *Conquerors* have erected, as trophies of devastation, shall be mouldered into dust, their memory shall remain,

“ Unhurt amid the war of elements,

“ The wreck of matter and the crush of worlds.”

HERE, Fellow-Citizens, let us pause for a moment to consider the inestimable privileges we enjoy.

INHABITING a territory of immense magnitude, capable of yielding to us the productions of almost every climate ; breathing an atmosphere of salubrious temperature, we are rapidly progressing in prosperity and happiness. The *Storm of War*, which now lays waste the fairest portion of the old world, does not agitate us with its fury. Removed from the vortex of *Europe's* politics, we are warned by her vices, and learn instruction from her misfortunes. In each quarter of the globe, the enterprize of *Americans* is pre-eminently manifested. Our Commerce pervades every region, from the Equator to the Circles, and is wafted by the zephyrs of remotest seas. At home too, we are witnessing improvements unparalleled in the history of other countries. Where, but lately, the *savage* wielded his tomahawk, and *beasts of prey* pursued their midnight ravages, we can now trace the footsteps of *CIVILIZATION* in all their important relations. Instead of the trackless Forest, expanding its foilage to the desert air, we behold flourishing Towns and Villages, replete with taste, industry and refine-

ment. Experiencing no external aggressions sufficient to excite the manly indignation of *Freemen*, nor domestic disturbances to annoy us in the enjoyment of the bounties of Providence, we are advancing, under the protection of just and salutary laws, to the happiest destinies.

IF we compare our condition with that of the most enlightened of other nations, we shall be forcibly impressed with its immense superiority.

IN *Europe*, the Demon of War still “rides on the whirlwind,” amid the destruction of Empires.—In his desolating career, he spreads devastation over the most flourishing Provinces, and causes Humanity to shudder at the miseries of her children.

FRANCE, towards the close of the eighteenth century, presented to our view an important appearance. Worn out with the oppressions of their subjugated state, and reduced to despair by no prospect of their alleviation, the enraged Multitude commenced an attack against the Majesty of the Throne. A *King* and *Princes*, *Nobles* and *Prelates*, fell the undistinguished victims of *Revolutionary fury*. But after wading thro’ blood to the *Temple of Liberty*; after suffering the severest privations, and exposing themselves to incalculable hardships, this versatile, but gallant People have stopped at the point from whence they started! Instead of erecting to themselves a FREE, ELECTIVE GOVERNMENT, on the ruins of their *Monarchy*, we behold them crouching at the foot of a *New Dynasty*, and vieing with each other in all the complaisance of *menial servitude*!

THE situation of *Great-Britain* affords us much to admire, but more to reprehend. Her character certainly ranks high in the walks of science and the arts. She can boast a splendid constellation of illustrious Statesmen, and the prowess of her Heroes has often rescued her from impending destruction. But her political regulations, high as they have been extolled, afford but little security to the rights of the subject. Her Commons, in theory supposed the Representatives of the People, are emphatically in practice the *venal instruments of the Ministry*—& her Lords, by birth hereditary Counsellors of the Crown, are too generally *hereditary to the vices and follies of their Ancestors*.

IF we pursue the comparison further, and survey the other portions of the European quarter of the globe, we shall feel a still stronger attachment to our domestic policy. Surrounded by monuments of ancient splendor, the oppressed subjects are universally benighted amid the darkness of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny. Where once *Freedom* flourished—where once the *Arts and Sciences* received the highest culture, and the human mind exerted its last effort in the various walks of *Polity and Literature*: we now behold an *abject multitude, reduced to the lowest rank in the scale of moral and political degradation!*

ENJOYING then, in so superior a manner, the blessings of Heaven, it may be interesting for us to investigate the *DANGERS* to which our social institutions are exposed.

I HAVE surveyed the Republics of Antiquity—

I have sought for the causes which led to their dissolution. A long course of prosperity introduced among them every species of *luxury*, and this *bane* of Freedom gradually effeminated the hardihood of their measures and sapped the foundation of public morality. As a consequence, *licentiousness*, like an overwhelming torrent, burst in upon them, destroying every barrier which *Virtue* had consecrated, and desolating the temples erected to *Liberty*. The voice of Patriotism was soon lulled to rest. The general good became bartered for the private interests of Individuals, and corruption, like a subtle poison, forced its way thro' every member of the body politic. And if ever the period should arrive in this happy Country, (*which may God avert!*) when the public mind shall be led astray by the allurements of vicious pursuits, and the great mass of our citizens shall cease to be solicitous for the purity of our manners and social policy; we shall then *follow the fate* of the Republics, which have preceded us, and regret too late the *destruction of our inestimable institutions*.

IN order to obviate the occurrence of so deplorable an event, suffer me to recommend *VIRTUE* and *MORALITY*, as the vital principles of all Free Governments. Let the *rising generation* be inspired with the importance of these objects to the welfare of Society. Let not the pollution of vice taint their tender minds, and draw them aside from the path of rectitude. Instil into their hearts the purest principles of *Patriotism*, and cherish their attachment to our political regulations. And it is incumbent on those of you, who, like myself, are just entering on the theatre of life, to

guard with sacred vigilance, the privileges bestowed upon us. Our Fathers, who stood out the storm of a Revolutionary warfare, to secure to their Posterity the Rights of Self-Government, are fast declining to the vale of years. But a short period more, in all human probability, and they will universally have paid the last sad debt of nature. A momentuous duty will then devolve upon us, to maintain undiminished the inheritance we may receive. And let us, with the same elevation of sentiment, which inspired them in the heat of the conflict, *solemnly unite* to defend the sacred boon, not only from the violence of *foreign aggression*, but the more probable danger of *internal discord*.

FINALLY, my Fellow-Citizens, let me adjure you to adhere to the *Constitution* as the ark of safety to all our Political blessings. Let not the rash hand of daring innovation impair its beauty, or distort its symmetry ; but if real defects it possess, (and what human system is perfect ?) let the excellent provision it contains for amendments, be put in operation with prudence and circumspection. Let us cultivate the social affections, and banish from our bosoms, the asperities of party spirit. So shall we increase in happiness and prosperity ; our *civil institutions*, the only remaining hope of the *friend of Freedom*, will remain undisturbed to the latest posterity ; and those sacred privileges, for which our *Fathers bled*, shall continue unimpaired 'till TIME AND EARTH ARE LOST IN ETERNITY AND CHAOS.