

AN
ADDRESS,

DELIVERED

AT THE MEETING HOUSE IN
PLYMOUTH, NEW-HAMPSHIRE,

TO THE

Washington Benevolent Society

OF THAT AND THE ADJACENT TOWNS,

ON THE 4TH DAY OF JULY,

1812.

BY JOHN ROGERS.

WHEN dangers press, and fears prevail,
Support the *Head*, and drop the *tail*:
Arouse, and real hope will glimmer,
In spite of ev'ry gallic trimmer,
Who slinks from truth, an awful distance,
And sily preaches *non-resistance*:
Awake, and stem the dreadful torrent,
(With patriotic zeal) abhorrent;
Light the old WASHINGTONIAN lamp,
And purge our *Achan* from the camp.

CONCORD:

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NOTE.

CONSIDERING the very short time allotted the Writer of this, for preparation, nothing would have induced him to furnish a copy for the press, even at this late period, but the repeated solicitation of a few friends in his vicinity; he being persuaded that minor productions of the kind are already too numerous.

Address.

MEN, BRETHREN, FATHERS, AND
FELLOW COUNTRYMEN!

TO commemorate the brilliant actions and achievements of patriots and heroes, and, at stated times, to recognize the great and important events which, under Providence, have taken place on the broad theatre of the world, has, from time immemorial, been a laudable practice among the children of men ; indeed, it was the mandate of God himself, to a distinguished leader of ancient Israel, at the miraculous ford of the river Jordan, to erect a lasting monument of *stone* ; that when *their* children should ask their fathers, in time to come, the intent and meaning of the same, the grateful hearts of posterity might be animated and refreshed by the marvellous goodness of Jehovah manifested to their renowned progenitors.

And why should not the American Israel rehearse to their listening and admiring offspring, the signal favor of Heaven, in conducting *them* through a Jordan of danger and distress, and a sea of blood, to a land of peace, plenty, and Independence ? Duty, gratitude, as well as good national policy, seem to conspire in favor of the measure.

A period of thirty-six years has rolled away, since the morning stars of our country, assembled upon the mountain rock of Liberty, whose top was enveloped with clouds of threatening vengeance ; and there, like angels trumpet-tongued, *sang* together the joyous song of Independence !

This glorious event was succeeded by a seven years arduous, bloody, and perilous contest, before the *ark* rested in the calm haven of Peace. But, from the local, discordant interests and feelings of the different sections of the country, and the native sluggishness of the confederation, it was palpably evident that a general compact, or federal Constitution, was indispensably necessary, in order to cement and energize the great whole; and thence from the collected wisdom and talents of our chosen patriots, sprang our excellent Constitution—our pride and boast, the wonder of the world, that specimen of consummate skill and research, which went into operation in spite of the daring and inveterate opposition of foreign and domestic enemies, who then, and ever since, have been striving to tarnish and destroy it!

On the outset of our general government, the finger of Heaven, as well as every true finger in America, seemed to point toward Washington, as needles to the pole, purporting that *he* must try the grand experiment, in the untried field of adventurous perplexity! Thus he, with a modest dignity peculiar to himself, assumed the mighty task; and his supereminent talents, his weight of character, and the intrepid neutral stand which he took with the jealous nations of Europe, will ever stand on history (in the two-fold term of his wise and impartial administration) as producing the golden days, the Augustan age of Columbia, and furnishing an unexampled æra of our national prosperity. Our country then smiled and rejoiced with gladness; our commerce flew upon the wings of every wind; our revenue rose majestic

as a young giant from his slumbers ; our ponderous strong-box groaned !...but not (as now) for the lack of money ; the sturdy husbandman, and the cheerly mariner shook the mutual hand of joyous affection ; and the world sought our valued friendship ; and, can it be said that this was not, in a good measure, the case in the reign next following the Washingtonian ? Let truth, experimental truth, answer and decide.

But here, alas ! we must pause ! and change our harp to the mournful key, and chant a melancholy dirge ! For, what friend to the real peace and prosperity of our degraded country can refrain from crying, in the language of Inspiration.....“ I am pained at my very heart ; my heart maketh a noise in me ; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war ! Destruction upon destruction is cried ; for the whole land is spoiled ; suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment ! for my people is foolish, they have not known me ; they are sottish children, they have none understanding ; they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.”

And will not generations yet unborn, when they shall turn over the historic pages of our country, and contemplate the passing events of the present times, resort to the like doleful strains of the plaintive Jeremiah, and say---“ How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people ! how is she become as a widow ! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary ! she weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks ; among

all her lovers she hath none to comfort her ; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies! Judge ye, all ye people."

In times of national calamity, it becomes a people seriously to inquire and search out the procuring causes of their peculiar distresses : if national sins produce the evils complained of, there is no remedy but speedy repentance and reformation ; but if they arise proximately from the crooked and partial, the unjust and destructive policy of the men in power, what's the remedy ? First, *negatively*, not by determined opposition, or open rebellion against the "*powers that be* ;" for that is like the sin of witchcraft ! But suffer me to say *positively*, that the only safe and effectual cure rests in the redeeming majesty of the people, by displacing the awkward offenders, and placing men of another and a better cast in their stead : this may be done without convulsion, and in strict conformity with constitutional rights and justice.

Whenever Providence sends wicked kings and rulers to govern kingdoms and states, it is done in wrath, and they richly deserve the punishment. But, forsooth, there seems to be current among us, at this juncture, a jesuitical doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance (as in the days of Charles II.) whereby the sovereign people of this nation are forbidden to investigate the conduct of their rulers, and directed to submit tamely to every measure imposed, for conscience sake ! But such a sentiment, unqualified, while there is a trace of genuine freedom left, will be scouted, by every feeling heart and judicious head in New England, as political heresy, bordering on blasphemy !!--

“ And that heart is a base one, and fit only for a slave’s bosom, that would not bleed freely, rather than submit to it.”

An over jealous, unreasonable disposition in a people, to carp and find fault with their rulers, is never advocated or justified by any rational man ; but, in a government like ours, where all power originates *in*, and emanates *from* the people ; and is transferred, or delegated to their servants only for safe keeping ; that steward, who refuses to render a strict and true account of his stewardship, ought to be suspected of evil designs upon his master ; and if that servant evades the light by closing his doors, or eludes investigation by a contemptuous disregard of petition or remonstrance, and wantonly postpones the consideration of grievance to a far distant day, must that sovereign master, the people, lay aside their innate majesty, forego their constitutional rights and powers, and, like Issachar, couch down beneath their burdens ? The term Independence hardly comports with such condition.

The inhabitants of this country, and more especially, of New England, *have been* remarkable for their firm attachment to the pure principles of civil liberty ; yea, it has seemed to be interwoven with the constituent fibres of their composition ; and thus with watchful eyes, and guardian care, they have built ramparts around her temple, in order to secure her from the inroads and encroachments of all her unhallowed enemies : and, as an eminent writer, of our own growth, very justly observes, “ if it had been in the nature of man that we should enjoy liberty, without the agitations of party, the

United States had a right to expect it ; but it was impossible ! Where there is no liberty, they may be exempt from party. It may seem strange, but it hardly admits of a doubt, that there are fewer malecontents in Turkey than in any free State in the world. Where the people have no power, they enter into no contests, and are not anxious to know how they shall use it. The spirit of discontent becomes torpid for want of employment, and sighs itself to rest. The people sleep soundly in their chains, and do not even dream of their weight. They lose their turbulence with their energy, and become as tractable as the bullocks in the yoke. Yet liberty, with all its party agitations, is more desirable than slavery. Who would not prefer the republics of Greece, where liberty once subsisted in its excess, its delirium, terrible in its charms, and glistening to the last, with the very fire that consumed it ! Should we not therefore prefer those republics to the dozing slavery of modern Greece ? where the degraded wretches have suffered scorn till they deserve it ; where they tread on classic ground, on the ashes of heroes and patriots, unconscious of their ancestry, ignorant of their nature, and almost of the name of liberty ?

They are unworthy of liberty, who entertain a less exalted idea of its excellenc. The misfortune is, that those who profess to be its most passionate admirers, have generally the least comprehension of its hazards and impediments. Delusive expectation ! But Washington was not thus deluded. We have his most solemn warnings against the often fatal propensities of liberty. He had reflected that men are often false to their country, and their

honor, false to their duty, and even to their interests ; but *multitudes* of men are never long false, or deaf to their passions. The life of the federal government, *he* considered, was in the breath of the people's nostrils ; and whenever they should become so infatuated or inflamed, as to abandon its defence, its end must be as speedy, and might be as tragical as a constitution of France !

“While Washington was administering the government in so wise and just a manner, as to engage a great majority of our enlightened citizens to co-operate with him for its support, and while *he* indulged the hope that time and habit were confirming their attachment, the French revolution had reached that point in its progress, when its terrible principles began to agitate all civilized nations !

“Scenes have passed there, which exceed description ; scenes, the recital of which would cause horror to gather about the heart like frost, and almost stop its pulse ! That revolution has been constant in nothing but its vicissitudes and its promises ; always delusive, but always renewed, to establish philosophy by crimes, and liberty by the sword. It has ever been, from the first, hostile to all right and justice, to all peace and order in society ; and therefore its very existence has been a state of warfare against the civilized world ; and most of all, against free and orderly republics : for such are never without factions, ready to be the allies of France, and to aid her in the work of destruction !” “Who then, on due reflection, will be surprized that the French and their partizans conceived the desire, and made the most powerful

attempts to revolutionize the American government? But it will seem strange that their enormities should be excused, as the effect of a struggle for liberty; and that so many of our citizens should be flattered, while they were insulted, with the idea that our example was copied, and our principles pursued."

Nothing was ever more false, or more fascinating. Our liberty depends on our education, our laws and habits, to which even prejudices yield; on the dispersion of our people upon farms, and on the almost equal diffusion of property: it is founded on morals and religion, whose authority reigns in the heart, and on the influence which all these produce on public opinion, before *that* opinion governs rulers. *Here*, liberty is restraint; *there*, it is violence: *here*, it is mild and cheering, like the morning sun of summer, brightening the hills, and making the vallies green: *there*, it is like the sun, when his rays dart pestilence upon the burning sands of Africa!

True American liberty calms and restrains the licentious passions, like an angel of peace, who says to the whirlwinds and troubled seas... "be still."

"How has French licentiousness appeared to the wretched citizens of Switzerland and Venice? Do not their haunted imaginations, even when they wake, represent her as a monster, with eyes that flash wild-fire; hands that hurl thunderbolts; and a voice that shakes the foundation of the hills? She stands--and her ambition measures the earth! She speaks—and an epidemic fury seizes the nations"!!

Pause, my countrymen, pause! and consider, whether you feel ready and willing to adopt the manners and customs, and to submit to the control of that terrible nation, who have not only abolished the Christian Sabbath, but have abjured the great Jehovah; who acknowledge no God but nature, and allow of no religion but reason!—whose blasphemous code wholly discards the doctrine of future retribution, and declares “*death to be eternal sleep!*” And shall this young country, which has hitherto been warmed and nourished by the genial sunshine of the Gospel of peace and righteousness, seek the allied friendship of a nation whose grasp is death, and whose breath is more poisonous than deadly pestilence? Mark the footsteps of that dreadful power, upon the ill-fated continent, where it has ravaged for nearly twenty years, and hear the murmurs, the groans, and the maledictions of those vassal kingdoms and republics, which, in mournful succession, have been withered and blasted by the deadly touch of that destroying angel! View the map of continental Europe, and restrain, if you can, the tear of pity, or the burst of indignation! *There*, behold France itself, the Italian states, the cantons of Switzerland, the German empire, Prussia, Holland, and Sweden, are gnawing their chains, and like Sampson, shorn of his locks, are grinding in the prison-house, and making sport for the harlots of France! View Spain, wreathing like a wounded adder, in the toils of dreadful uncertainty, and yet biting the heels of her barbarous invaders!—And, in the back ground, see Russia, even now, opposed with enormous front to the all-conquer-

ing legions of Bonaparte : and if numbers could furnish a barrier to his whirlwind progress, there might be hope ; but, like Cæsar, he comes, he sees, he conquers ! And, probably, we shall soon hear, (after a horrid scene of carnage and death on the gory fields of Poland, or an abject compliance with the continental system) that Alexander retreats to Petersburg, and that Napoleon returns to Paris, yet thirsty as death for blood !

And is it not, my friends, an awful and a stubborn fact, that the aforesaid dismal condition of Europe has been effected *more* by the preconcerted intrigues and diplomatic juggling of France, than by her arms ? Let degraded Europe, with confusion of face, answer the inquiry.

And, in fine, "experience is lost upon *us*, if we deny that the madd'ning phrenzy of France has seized a part of the American nation : it is, however, as sober and intelligent as free, and as worthy to be free as any nation in the world ; yet, like all other people, we have our passions and prejudices : " but may Heaven grant, that they may be so calmed and corrected, that, while sun and moon shall endure, this country may yet ride out the storm, and continue a peaceable and prosperous land.

BRETHREN OF THIS SOCIETY,

Permit me to congratulate you upon this most important anniversary, that, notwithstanding the gloomy and boisterous clouds that darken our hemisphere, we can still enter the temple of our God,

the God of our fathers, and unite under the banner of our country's rights, as the professed political disciples of the incomparable WASHINGTON; and that, while his mortal body sleeps in the quiet sepulchre at *MOUNT VERNON*, his immortal virtues, his splendid example, and his golden precepts, still live in the warm hearts of his fond admirers—And although his degraded country, with ingratitude darker than Egypt, have denied him even a slab of monumental marble, let us suitably resent the base indignity, by embalming his glorious memory in each of our hearts!

My friends, ponder his character, study his maxims, disseminate his principles, and practise his virtues, 'till slander shall be tongue-tied, and the busy hum of reproach shall rest in eternal sleep—in the mean time remembering, that even *Washington* himself, while agonizing for the good of his country, with all his superlative merit, escaped not the hidden sting of calumny!

View the symbols upon our beautiful banner,* where the twin-sisters of our country's wealth, *Agriculture* and *Commerce*, are ingeniously portrayed; and forget not the declaration of our great Patron, "that ill treatment and abuse shown to the younger, would sicken and destroy the elder."

Harbor no unjust partiality for one foreign nation more than another; and with regard to antipathy, observe the same rule: for the nation that indulges such propensities, is on the high road to slavery.

* A superb Society-standard, carried in the procession, and displayed before the audience in the meeting house.

Children of WASHINGTON! maturely consider and appreciate the immense value of your constitutional right of suffrage; and strive, by all lawful means, to correct the monstrous abuse of it, by a direct appeal to reason and conscience: for, by such wicked prostitution of privilege by some, joined to a criminal negligence in others, our country is now in sackcloth!

In fine, rally around the Constitution of your country: watch—guard—defend it, at every hazard: and although it be clipt, mangled, and mutilated, by unhallowed hands, yet cling to the fragments like the companions of St. Paul at Melita; so that, haply, you may all escape the tempestuous sea of folly and madness, and at last leave your dear country standing firm upon the pillars of Independence, once formed and polished by the masterly hand of our WASHINGTON.