

WORCESTER, JULY 5, 1815.

MR. PELEG SPRAGUE,

AS a Committee in behalf of the Gentlemen who celebrated the 4th of July instant, in Worcester, we thank you for the elegant, spirited and patriotick Oration with which you obliged the company, and request a copy for the press.

EDWARD BANGS,
LEVI LINCOLN, JUN. } Committee.
LEVI HEYWOOD,

WORCESTER, JULY 10, 1815.

GENTLEMEN,

BELIEVING that the unusual shortness of the notice upon which my address was prepared would justify a departure from the established custom, I had intended to decline its publication. But a sense of obligation will not permit me to refuse your polite request. Accept therefore, Gentlemen, this *ephemeral offspring of a gala-day*, as a token of gratitude for your favours.

With great deference,

Respectfully your humble servant,

PELEG SPRAGUE.

HON. EDWARD BANGS,
HON. LEVI LINCOLN, JUN. } Committee.
LEVI HEYWOOD, Esq.

ORATION.

FRIENDS & FELLOW-CITIZENS :

HALLOWED be the day, which gave existence to our nation. To perpetuate the custom established by national feeling, let us celebrate it with the voice of patriotism, and the prayer of gratitude. Humble will be the attempt, as the ability of the speaker. Those who beheld the scenes of which he has only heard, and those who long have sacrificed on the altar of Independence, will expect little from him who now, for the first time, officiates at the ceremony. Novelty is not to be expected nor is it desirable. We assemble not to originate, but to confirm what has already been established ; to strengthen principles which never must waver ; to vivify feelings which never should languish ; to add another bond of union by reciprocating mutual opinions and mingling congenial sentiments.

Duly to appreciate the event we celebrate, we must obtain some adequate conceptions, not only of the blessings we enjoy, but of the miseries we have escaped. Standing as we now do on an em-

inence as proud as our mountains, with a prospect before us as extensive and as beautiful as our country, we must not forget the gulf from which we have been delivered. A series of great events has, ever since our political redemption, been shewing us in varied colours the ruin which would have attended a continuance of our connexion with England. We now see that the most appalling apprehensions of our Fathers would have been more than realized; that our situation as a colony must have been more miserable than the wildest fears could have anticipated, or the darkest imagination could have portrayed.

As a colony of England, where would have been our wealth and our strength? Where would have been our national character and our republican institutions?

Unceasing war must have been our portion, not for any object which interests America, but merely to subserve the pride of Britain; to restore a stupid Bourbon, or a fanatick Ferdinand. Of commerce we should have had only the miserable pittance, which her sordid monopolists should think for their interest to allow; of manufactures—none; of internal improvement, only what could rise under the heavy hand of jealous power. No channel of wealth would have been left open, which did not pour its treasures on the shores of England. Our sailors would have been swept from our decks by a legalized banditti, to fight by thousands, as they have done by hundreds, the battles of England; to increase her glory and perpetuate the degradation of their country. Our artisans would have been made to forge our bonds; to decorate the throne, and carve the sceptre of our oppression.

The citizens who clothe our fields in wealth, would have enriched the mountains of Spain, or the marshes of Holland with their blood. And where cultivation now smiles on us gaiety and life, the forest would still have frowned in gloom and terror. Under England we should still have had the villainy which annoyed her, sent to us for punishment; and the greater villainy which served her sent here for its reward. Those who now go to Botany bay would have come to the colonies; and the turpitude, which now receives a pension, would have filled a provincial office. To compensate the ministers of her corruption, these offices would have been indefinitely multiplied, and their salaries inordinately increased; and thus her fund of *secret service money* might have been considerably reduced. But these vermin now feed on the rotten fabric which generates them, and already have they ensured its dissolution! Fearing elevation of the mind, she would have fostered ignorance to create servility. And with jealous apprehension that the elastic spring of youthful and expansive vigour would one day burst our fetters, and rise under our burthens, she would have secured the continuance of her dominion, by increasing the weight which kept us down; by imposing on us a standing army of foreign mercenaries, to batten on our labours; to make our citizens the object of their plunder, and the sport of their brutality. And would these have embraced all our injuries? Would it have sufficed to have been sunk under ever raging war; the strength of our population torn from us; manufactures and improvement suppressed; with only a pitiful refuse of commerce;

industry paralysed, and every avenue to wealth closed against us ; governed by swarms of official Harpies, and protected by bands of savage Hessians or merciless Cossacks ! Would these miseries have been enough ? No ! we must have paid a debt of gratitude for this parental protection ! And this debt of gratitude must have been commensurate with the debts of our protectress ! For this every semblance of prosperity must have been sacrificed ; for this the hand of Poverty must have yielded its mite, and the mouth of Hunger have spared its morsel !—We should have been sunk deep in bitter waters to buoy up the sinking government of England ! As a momentary prop to the leaning tower, we must have been shivered and buried in its inevitable fall !

With whining grimace we have been told to lament our severance from Britain as the separation of a child from its parent ! No ! we were taken, a *vigorous shoot* from a *rotten tree*, where, the source of strength dried up, and blasted by its deadly shade, we should have fallen a *withered sapling*, under a *putrescent trunk* !

These injuries are not perhaps even the most prominent of those which would have attended a continuance of our subjection. For a further enumeration, hear again the declaration of our Independence ; read the black list of England's crimes ! or go to the Indian Patriot, and the Irish Catholic !

Our Fathers not only delivered us from impending misery, but secured to us the highest political happiness. Without their labours the world would have wanted the sublime example which our republican institutions present to *them*, and we

should have wanted the magnificent blessings which they secure to *us*.

POLITICAL LIBERTY has been so much the theme of empty declamation, and has been worshipped by its pretended votaries with such a display of rapturous enthusiasm, that it seldom is contemplated with any distinct ideas of its importance. The question, to what form of government shall we submit, involves our lives and our happiness; it is a question how far the rights which our God has given us shall be relinquished. All government is an encroachment on our natural liberty; and we resort to it only for deliverance from the greater evils of anarchy; for the protection of person and property. *That government then is most perfect which ensures security, with the least diminution of natural rights.* And that government is ours! Think not that I shall presumptuously attempt a panegyrick on our constitution. I will only say, that strangely perfect will be that society where there is greater *security* than with us; and far, far indeed must mankind have advanced in the fancy-formed system of Perfectibility, before they can bear *less restraint* than our government imposes. The enemies of our constitution have sometimes told us that it possessed an oppressive degree of strength; again they have declared that it could stand only in a calm; that it would totter in the breeze, and fall before the blast. Their conflicting opinions prove its perfection.

Without the event we celebrate, where would have been our national character? Where would have been that GLORY which makes us proud of the name of AMERICAN? This blessing, like political liberty, has dazzled many, and been calmly

valued by few. But national glory is not the evanescent gleam of transitory splendour, whose only effect is to astonish for the moment. Its value is not to be estimated by the importance of individual character. Reputation is desirable to an individual; to a community it is essential. In society, a person's safety does not depend upon his character; he is secured from injury by the protection of the laws. But nations are to each other as individuals in a state of nature; their peace always depends on their reputation; and for their existence they oftentimes are indebted to the opinion which others entertain of their ability to defend themselves. They must then for their own preservation, be fastidiously jealous of their honour; for insult leads to contempt, and contempt to injury, aggression and ruin.

National glory is not only a protection from external injury, but is the strength—the cement of the society. It binds the citizens to each other by affectionate admiration. It is the soul which animates them; the sun of the political system, which at the same time irradiates and vivifies, and with irresistible attraction, holds all within the sphere of union.

The more exalted the character of a nation, the greater degree of liberty it can enjoy; for where the feelings of the subject give energy to government, less strength is required to secure its object. Free governments, depending on the feelings and opinions of the citizens, can exist only with national honour, and its destitution or declension is the precursor of their downfall. How long did the Grecian republics owe their preservation to their pride, and their elevation of national thought? To

pride of character, and a passion for distinction we owe all that is beautiful in art, valuable in science, or heroick in achievement.

The topicks which have merely been suggested, demand our frequent and serious contemplation. The ruin attendant on a connexion with England; the character of that nation; the perfection of our constitution, and the importance of national honour must always be present to our minds; to excite our gratitude to those who achieved our deliverance, and those who have preserved our government and augmented our glory; and to rouse us to constant vigilance against the machinations of England and of those men amongst us who, devoted to her interest, are the enemies of our government and our honour. And are there men amongst us who are enemies to our Independence! who lament our severance from that nation, whose alliance is misery, which twice has attempted to enslave us, and still is intent on our destruction! Are there enemies to that constitution which blesses them! whose splendid perfection receives the benediction of the philanthropist of every country, and calls forth his fervent aspirations for its continuance! Are there in the midst of us men who would degrade our national character! that guardian of our safety; that support of our constitution, which binds us in the bonds of brotherhood; makes us proud of our country and bold to defend it! Oh, that these questions could claim even a momentary hesitation; and that the instant affirmative response of every mind were not the result of accurate observation of melancholy facts! Oh, that the proofs of such a party in our country were not interwoven with every event of

our history ! that they had not expanded with our infancy, and become irresistible with our strength !

Called upon to speak of England and her party, we would not arouse one unhallowed feeling ; we wish not to strike one chord that may not be attuned to joy and harmony. But in the moment of peace and exultation, we must not forget the hour of danger and depression. We must steadily observe our enemies, review the conduct of the past, and defeat the designs of the future. In the political warfare which we are called upon to wage from duty, and from gratitude, let us never identify the individual with the party ; and remember, that however black the character of the latter, that of the former may be unsullied. We never must forget that there are some, whose only error is the uniting with their enemies ; and others, whose only virtue is their republicanism. But those, who innocently rally under the banner of opposition, have no right to complain, if we mistake their principles and feelings while clouded by the atrocities of the leaders whom they support. We doubt not that as the pupil of Bolingbroke was frightened to find that the principles he had versified meant infidelity, so the dupes of faction will recoil to discover, that they have echoed the notes of Rebellion.

We spurn the idea of judging a friend to his country by the narrow criterion of party politics. No matter what his party name, or political associations ; no matter what his errors, antipathies or prejudices, if he have *honest principles*, and *American feelings*, we embrace him with the cordiality of a brother.

Although where mistake is possible, we never must condemn, and must even suspect with cau-

tious reluctance, yet generous emotions are not to be suppressed for *heartless suavity*; nor virtuous principle to be eaten up by *affected candor*. When Treason or Infidelity stares us in the face! we are not to *mince and qualify*; to *whisper* what ought to be proclaimed, and *softly disapprove* where strong abhorrence is demanded. When Virtue shall look upon Vice, without mingling her glow of indignation with the softness of her pity, she will lose half her beauty, and more than half her character.

In politicks, as in religion, there are points in which we cannot mistake however fallible our understanding, or deceptive our passions; and, there, doubt would be criminal. In morals our opinion of the depravity of a particular person, or a single action, will often be erroneous; but attachment to virtue, and detestation of vice cannot be wrong. We cannot err in condemning those, who, arrayed with the enemies of religion, would obstruct its progress, degrade its character and destroy its influence.—So, of particular men, or individual political measures, we often misjudge, but love to our country and devotion to its cause cannot be wrong. We cannot err in strongly condemning those who unite with its enemies; who would have crippled its infancy, would have disgraced its name and destroyed its blessings.

It would be idle to attempt an enumeration of the instances, in which such a party have discovered their attachments and aversions. The same Anti-American spirit has always pervaded their conduct, and has invariably pointed them to England, with more than magnetic attraction. Not only every political event, but every produc-

tion of every art, whether useful or elegant, has been stamped with dark testimonials of their infamy. If American, it is marked with strong contempt, if English, emblazoned with all the colours of predetermined admiration. To undertake an exposure of every example of this spirit, would be an attempt to analyse every drop of the ocean, for the whole current of our history has been blackened by the infusion; not a particle of the stream has been untinged or unimbittered by its gall. They speak of our country as if it never had, and never could produce any thing which is not utterly despicable. With their European masters they “belittle nature” on this side the Atlantick, and degrade the physical and intellectual powers in America. With these men, the traducers of America, our government can do nothing right—with the apologists of England, her “king can do no wrong.”

When England treated the ocean as her conquest, and swept *our* wealth to fill *her* treasuries, for this, they told us, she deserved our praise and our gratitude! It was to protect us—against those whom we did not fear! and we ought to thank her for exercising despotick dominion over *two thirds* of the earth, because *her* enemy wished to get possession of the *other*!

If an American has married or been naturalized in England, and to naturalization she gives every facility; if he have entered her service, been inveigled or forced to receive the bounty, she has incontestibly a right to enslave him for life! But if we naturalize a subject of England, it is a violation of the laws of nations and of nature! If from the *importunity* of her sailors, we admit

them to our service, they are demanded at the cannon's mouth ! and all this is perfectly consistent with the equality of nations, and pious England metes to us the measure she would receive !

Never yet has the gallant RODGERS been forgiven, for daring to defend our flag, when his Majesty's officers felt disposed to disgrace it ! And when, direct from our ports of hospitable friendship, they attacked another of our national ships in a moment of unprepared security, disgraced our country, and murdered our citizens on the decks of the Chesapeake, and the yard arm of the Leopard ! a burst of American feeling shook the union ; for a moment, the friends of England were silenced and appalled. But soon, this outrage could be *excused*, and at last this *affair* became *justifiable* ! They have been openly the advocates of dishonour, the apologists of blood !

When a brother, whose bosom swells high with generous feelings, in the pride of manhood, is cloven down by a gang of licensed ruffians, wrested from his family, and his liberty ; condemned to the pestilence of every climate and the horrors of every sea, writhing through life under the stripes which lash his days of toil, and turn his nights of watching from illusion to agony ; without one beam of cheering hope, or one token of relenting pity—the cries of the victim are drowned in acclamations to England's JUSTICE ! and his sufferings concealed by a picture of England's HUMANITY !

Before the commencement of the late war, these men invited foreign hostility, by declaring to the *world*, that we were too weak, and too dastardly

to repel aggression ; and seconded that hostility, by telling us that it was unjustifiable to defend our violated rights, and our injured honour.

When war was declared for the protection of person and property, the only legitimate object of all government, without which its constraint is tyranny, and its burdens are oppression ; they openly avowed a determination to prostrate their country to the feet of its enemy ! to reduce us to such unconditional submission, that we *must* receive the terms which England should impose ! and this they *pretended* ;—for the host of Lucifer did not rebel without pretence !—this they pretended was to give us peace !—Yes, they wished the deadly blast of England's conquest to sweep through our land, to give it the peace the Simoom leaves the desert !! The means they adopted were worthy of such an object. For this did they not rob our treasury ? for what does it matter whether they forcibly take from the publick chest, or arrest the hand conveying its supply ? For this did they not destroy our armies ? what does it matter whether by promoting desertions or preventing enlistments ? They prated much of pious feelings and religious scruples ! But the splendor of religion shone as the torch of truth on the dark deformity it was intended to conceal, and which required a cloak broader and blacker than night. Those who subscribed the oath of office in this State, solemnly promised, under the tremendous sanctions of religion, “to defend the Commonwealth against *all hostile attempts whatsoever.*” Did the conquest and occupation of a great portion of the Commonwealth by the fleets and armies of the enemy, comprise any “*hostile attempt?*”

And did they defend, or endeavour to defend us against it! To their boasted consciences; to their disgraced constituents, I appeal for an answer.

With what emotions have we heard their wishes, that our brethren might meet with disaster and destruction in the hand of the enemy! But take the life of the soldier, and spare the meed of honour for which he yields it. Of this have they laboured to deprive him! To achievements of heroism, which gave security to all that we enjoy, a legislative assembly has either denied the paltry reward of a barren vote of thanks, or insulted with condemnatory praise! This indeed was not without an honourable instance of the honest feelings of individuals spurning the shackles of party; and these prove the character of the rest.

These men at first attempted to envelope the heroes of the ocean! But the sun soon rose from the deep; dispelled the mist which the breath of Faction had blown in the hour of darkness; and abashed, they fell down in fear and worshipped it. They have wept at their country's successes, and rejoiced at their country's disgrace! The splendour of those successes they have endeavoured to obscure, and the stain of that disgrace, they have laboured to render deep and indelible. Already has that fraternity, which "possesses all the talents of the nation," found some "*American gentleman*" to embody the base falsehoods of the officers whom we defeated, under the prostituted name of history; and attached it with artful malignity to a work of excellence, that it may be dragged down to posterity, to deprive them of the achievements we bequeath, and our heroes of the immortality they have earned!

The magnanimity, and veracity of England still rung in our ears, while we beheld the defenders of her honour and her glory, the last in every country to be tainted with meanness, sink to false and contemptible subterfuges ! What elevation of thought can be left in a nation, where the most noble and exalted support themselves by the crooked props of falsehood ? Their king and his ministers have shewn us ; for they can boldly and magnanimously strike our flag, on the “ serpentine river” before the sovereigns of Europe, while we strike theirs, on the ocean before the world ! While the Eagle soars above them, with his undazzled eye fixed on glory’s brightest blaze, they can paint him beneath the Lion in his shadowed den !

When, by unforeseen events, our enemy was enabled to pour on us the whole of her power, which had been represented so gigantick, that even while struggling for her existence, she could spare enough to overwhelm us ; then loud rose their shouts of gratitude and exultation. The glorious consummation—the reward of all their labours was at hand !—America was to be overthrown ; republicanism annihilated ; the tree of Liberty rooted up, and in its place they already saw some precious sprig of Royalty hung with tinsel, garters and gewgaws !

We have not yet forgotten, never must we forget the days of darkness which succeeded ; when REBELLION AGAINST THE LAWS,—DISSOLUTION OF THE UNION,—CIVIL WAR, and the DOWNFALL OF OUR GOVERNMENT were familiar to our ears ! the theme of common discourse ! the object of common anticipation ! debated upon by publick meetings of all classes, from *taverners* to

conventionists! We then saw before us the horrid offspring of the labours of those men, who care not how dark the clouds of revolution lower around, or how tremendous the tempest which threatens us, if they may but gleam, the meteor of the storm!

In a moment of salvation we were delivered—removed from all that Philanthropy can fear, to all that Patriotism can wish. It was a proud moment of triumph to America, when, standing alone against the whole power of England, we extorted a peace by the vigour of our arms.—We avenged our injuries, and chastised those, who had insulted and contemned us. We secured the inviolability of the rights for which we contended—express stipulations indeed we have none; we did not require them, nor would they have been worth receiving. What is the value of promises from a nation, whom “no treaties can bind?” Why ask the plighted faith, in which it would be folly to confide? The effectual guarantee of the rights for which we fought, is the smarting of the lashes, and the rankling of the wounds we inflicted. Let her remember our PORTERS, our PERRYS, and our JACKSONS, and we ask no other pledge of peace; these magick names will be a talisman to guard it, when a bit of parchment, with the names of Gambier, Adam and Goulburn, would be frittered to the winds.

On her honour, her justice, or her faith we place no reliance; our safety is founded on our strength; our peace on her memory of what she has suffered.

Would you perpetuate what you now enjoy? Would you preclude the dangers which you have escaped? Steadily observe the character of England, and her friends among you. In the words of

WASHINGTON ; “ against the insidious wiles of foreign influence, the jealousy of a free people ought to be *constantly* awake.” Republicks can be preserved only by the vigilance of the honest. In the hour of calmness, review the moment of passion, and guard against those political evils, which menaced your destruction, with the same feelings and solicitude, with which you provide against the recurrence of the conflagration, which threatened your dwellings.

Think not that in condemning the one party we necessarily approve all the conduct of the other. That conduct has in many instances been weak, and in some flagitious. The subject has no connexion with contracted party politicks, the mere paltry disputes of *Ins* and *Outs*.

In warning against the character of England, we have nothing to do with her European enemy, with that land of *atheism, revolution* and *crime* ; whose atrocities we have long seen depicted in all their darkness, while those of England were concealed from our view. Republicans in principle, we detested the Oppressor of other nations and the Tyrant of his own. We lamented his fall, for it boded ruin to our country. We lament his restoration, but, although we may regret the choice of the French people, it would be unjustifiable in us, as it is in England or Russia, to dictate to an independent nation. Admiration of the exploits of Bonaparte has been construed into attachment ; so Milton loved Satan, for he made him the hero of his poem.

In delineating the character of England as she is, we are not unwilling to do justice to what she has been ; but too many look only at the past, and do not

observe the present. Has she been great and magnanimous? So has Athens. Her past excellence cannot atone for her present depravity. Her past lustre, when it ceases to dazzle, will heighten the contrast. Can the spirit of her Howard smile on the prison-ship? Or the memory of Hampden and Sydney accord with the slavery of her seamen? Will the magnanimity of her Nelson sanction the mercenary rapacity of her Cockburns, and the cowardly prevarications of her Dacres' and her Barclays? Can the integrity of her Hale conceal the sordid servility which dictates the varying decisions of her Scott? Or the intellect of a Newton atone for the sophistry which now quibbles away justice and principle? Will the blood of her martyrs consecrate the Inquisition? Can the purity and eloquence of her Pitt sanctify the bloody denunciations of her exterminating councils? No, for on the tomb of Aristides the blood-thirsty Turk whets his cimenter, and the baleful Crescent waves over the land of Demosthenes!

Britannia has been majestick and splendid; now, shrivelled and blackened, disastrous is the reflection of former glory! In the decrepitude of age, tottering she stands in the midst of the ocean; the tempest hath scattered her plumes; *Columbia* hath snatched the wreath from her brow, hath plucked the decorations of her arts, and quenched the "meteor" of her "flag" in the waves which surround her. She leans on terrific Rapine her relentless minister, he sweeps the ocean with the hand of plunder, and unglutted with the spoils and the carnage of both the hemispheres, still she feasts on the blood of his victims! With devouring fires at her heart, her friendship is desolation,

her protection is death. Her sceptre is a branch from the deadly Upas ; she waves it, and scatters poison and devastation ; beneath it are corruption and convulsive misery ! Behold it depopulate Ireland and India by its withering touch ! It blackens the East with pestilence, and we hear the cries of agony and the groans of dissolution arise from the sons of Erin, and the plains of Indostan ! She stretched it across the Atlantick—it was shivered and withdrawn. But its effluvia reached our land, and where it touched, it maddened. Few were the victims of its poison, but those were infuriate. In their frenzied eye, nature was inverted—Columbia's loveliness was deformity ! her splendour and symmetry were blackness and distortion ! the Fiend who touched them alone was beautiful ! her fangs were fair—her shadow was brightness ! Their scourge they loved ! their Protectress they hated ! Many were tainted by *the few* or bewildered in the tumult which they raised. The tumult subsides. The many will recover their reason and their purity, and the thoroughly corrupt will be banished from our sight.

Yes, Republicans ; the enemies of our country, the authors of its miseries will be known and detested. The waves are not at rest the moment the tempest ceases to rage ; but already has the fetid mass, which floats only by their convulsion, begun to sink. Already have the factious few been doomed to obscurity by a voice unerring as an oracle, and those, WHO RODE ON THE STORM MUST "ANCHOR IN THE CLOUD."