

AN
ORATION,
DELIVERED
IN THE
DUTCH CHURCH,
IN THE
CITY OF SCHENECTADY,
ON THE
Fourth of July,

1801:

BEFORE A CROWDED AUDIENCE.

By Gideon Starr.

ALBANY:

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CORNER OF STATE AND PEARL-STREETS.

Adelphic Society Hall,

August 15, 1801.

Resolved, That the Oration delivered on the last Anniversary of American Independence, by our highly respected, and since deceased, fellow Member, Gideon Starr, be published at the expence of the Society.

By Order of the Society,

Joseph L. Mills, Pres.

Attested,

James Mathews, Sec.

To the Public.

THE following Pages are submitted to the Public, by the Adelpic Society, composed of a part of the Students of Union College, of which the Author was a Member.

GIDEON STARR, of the City of Schenectady, was a Fellow of the Philosophical Class in Union College---a youth of twenty years of age, of fair prospects, and promising to be a useful member of the community---But death, *the last enemy of man*, stopped him in his full career to fame and usefulness, and has consigned him to the silent tomb.

THE following Oration, was delivered by the Author, to a crowded Audience, on the 4th day of July last, about three weeks before his death.

ESTEEM, and the tenderest affection, for a deceased Brother and Fellow Student, have influenced the Society to bring into public view a juvenile Production, which the modesty of the Author would have forbidden.

Schenectady, Union College, }
August 15, 1801. }



A N

O R A T I O N

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P A T R I O T I S M.

THE Anniversary of the *Æ*ra which immortalized the AMERICAN name has at length arrived.—Relying on the importance of the occasion, and the indulgence of my audience, more than on any consciousness of my own abilities, I come forward, thus publicly, to exert the feeble efforts of youth and inexperience.

Whilst the earth is trembling to its centre with the thunder of war, while the constant effusion of human blood is fertilizing the plains of the East; what pleasure must it afford a free and enlightened nation, to celebrate in peace and safety the ANNIVERSARY of her INDEPENDENCE—A day, which released her from the sceptre of tyranny—which freed her from slavery—which made her happy. Such, my friends, is the time, and such the occasion, on which we are now assembled. Conscious that I am addressing a numerous assembly of worthy patriots, I have chosen PATRIOTISM, as a subject most acceptable to such an audience.

To trace this principle from its source, and delineate every happy effect it has upon a nation, would require more labor of the speaker, and more patience of the hearer, than either of us can bestow on the present occasion. Besides, I am sensible there are very few in this crowded assembly who are ignorant of the principles in which true patriotism consists.

Who is there present whose heart does not recoil at the thought of disgrace or injury being brought upon his country? Where is that person to be found who can without emotion, listen to the authentic details of depredation on our commerce, abuse of our seamen, or the confiscation of our lawful property by foreign powers? Who of you, my audience, can hear of the infraction of our treaties, or the violation of our laws, without shedding the sympathetic tear of patriotic affection? If there be any such person in this assembly, to him I can afford no consolation. For persons of this description are not only strangers to true patriotism, but even destitute of natural affection. With pleasure do I read in the faces of my audience, sentiments the reverse of what I have been mentioning. True patriotic ardor glows in every anxious breast. Each countenance proclaims the sincere language of the heart. Cherish these sentiments, and you shall see your beloved country teeming with the rich blessings of freedom. It was patriotism which procured your liberty, and by this alone can it be preserved. This is the soul of our republic—it constitutes the prosperity of our nation, and the happiness of every individual. It raises the mind above the vulgar cares of private emolument—discards vain ambition—converts pusillanimity into bravery—and entirely devotes the possessor to the public weal.

View ancient Greece, view Rome, see every famous republic, whether ancient or modern—each owes her

birth, each her existence to patriotism. What army could withstand the Grecian discipline? Armed and defended by true patriotic ardor, they rushed on, regardless of death, bringing glory to their country. Not all the splendid trappings, not all the glittering spears, brandished by the Persians, could daunt LEONIDAS; who, with his three hundred Greeks, encountered a million of Persians. Bravely he fought, dealing destruction among his numerous foes; Nobly he fell, yet lives in fame.

Rome too was free; Rome knew true patriotism: It was this called CINCINNATUS from his peaceful retirement to the helm of state.

It was this taught noble FABIVS to defend his country—taught him contentment in his country's safety. Such are the patriots who deserve our esteem, rather than those, who Alexander like, conquer the world to gratify their ambition. But where is now that patriotic spirit, which once raised Greece and Rome above the world? Taught nations, greater than themselves, to fear them, and come in suppliant terms to seek their favor. This pearl of price has long since gone—exterminated by luxury, that fiend of darkness! she has left the once happy shores of Greece and Rome, and come to foster infant Columbia. But, like other great blessings, she comes not without her concomitants, *Liberty* and *Literature*, follow all her steps. Look back, for a moment, on her deserted empires—observe their inhabitants, few in number, rough in manners, ignorant and uncivilized. Too stupid, even to regret the loss of those blessings with which their ancestors were favored. A sad lesson this of the decay of nations; but fraught with useful instructions for those who are in prosperous circumstances.

From this sad catastrophe, my countrymen, learn wisdom. Receive Patriotism, and Liberty its attendant, as your most welcome guests : Manifest to others your zeal in your country's cause ; inculcate the same principles into them ; disseminate in the breasts of your little offspring the seeds of patriotism—that this principle, taking root in youth, and growing with their growth, may prove the bulwark of their future safety. Act not the part of the unprofitable servant, hiding your talent in the earth. Why should the love of your country, like the useless treasure of the miser, lie secreted from the world ? It is by the fruit the tree is judged, and we know the sad fate of that tree which produces no fruit. If you love your country, you will be anxious to serve her, and promote her prosperity. But if you manifest no marks of such an inclination, the world will be suspicious of your pretensions, and your patriotism, however pure you may imagine it, will gain you very little credit in the opinion of mankind. The most obvious marks of patriotic affection, are an anxiety for the promotion of virtue—a liberal spirit for bestowing donations on public occasions—and an ardent desire for the promotion of such men as are best qualified to manage the several branches of our government. He who promotes these noble ends, preserves the freedom and happiness of his country ; for these are the corner-stones, on which the great fabric of our national liberty depends.

Though our love for our country should be ardent, and our exertions for our common interest incessant ; yet we should not permit our emulation to kindle into envy, or strive to found our popularity on the degradation of others. For we shall find it much more easy, and far more honorable, to eclipse our rivals by outshining them in merit, than by reducing them either by force or intrigue.

As true patriots, it is our duty to make friends of all whose friendship may be useful to us, or whose resentment dangerous. The friendship of nations is an inestimable blessing, and a free commerce, which must be the result of such friendship, is one of the greatest sources of our opulence. What but such a commerce could vent the profusion of our exuberant soil? What else could afford employment to our merchants, or encouragement to our farmers? Deprive America of this, and her public prisons will be broken down with innumerable swarms of bankrupts. Her farmers would languish in sloth and idleness; forgetful of their present industry, they would be content with supplying their own necessities. This idleness would soon beget effeminacy and an aversion to business; vice would be introduced to fill up the vacancies of time: this would immediately sap the foundation of our republic, and ensure the inevitable destruction of our dear bought liberties. By this catastrophe, irretrievable would be our loss; for many and great are the blessings attending our free government; they are indeed too numerous to be mentioned, and inestimable in their excellence.—But justice forbids that the greatest blessing ever conferred on the human race, should any longer pass unnoticed. The blessing to which I allude is our religious liberty. Many anniversaries have rolled away; oft has this stately dome refounded with the praises of civil liberty, while our religious freedom, which should be the greatest cause of our rejoicing, has remained unmentioned. With shame must we confess this. How unlike our noble ancestors, who to gain this blessing, left their country and friends, crossed the wide ocean, penetrated the howling wilderness, encountered savages, created a new republic, and laid the foundation of our present greatness. Rouse from your lethargy; defend that blessing which was purchased with the blood of innocence. Remember that this is the foun-

dation of all our happiness, on this depends our national prosperity.

Let your philanthropy, your love of freedom, your fondness for civilization, and that patriotic spirit which watches with an anxious eye over the happiness of the republic, all stimulate you to preserve your religious liberty. So long as we are actuated by these principles, we have no reason to fear that we shall be robbed of our liberties, either civil or religious ; but we ought ever to be on our guard, lest suffering our patriotism to be extinguished, and forgetting the price of the blessings we enjoy, we permit luxury and dissoluteness, those banes of republicanism to destroy what the weapons of an army never could have reached. From this take warning. You now see the secret snares which are spread for your destruction. Let not this discovery prove a terror to you, but rather let this teach you wisdom, and call forth every energy of the soul, while it is yet possible to avert the impending danger. Despair not because destruction is possible ; for where is the nation that is not exposed to luxury, debauchery, and vice, with all their train of evils ? Can any of the ancient republic's boast of greater privileges than America ? Have they been less exposed to luxury and vice ? Did even the Roman republic exceed us in extent of territory or fertility of soil ? Did the arts and sciences flourish more among any of these nations than in the United States ? Did they produce more worthy patriots, or greater generals ? One great example is sufficient to silence all the greatness they could ever boast. The god-like WASHINGTON, the hero and the patriot, the general and the statesman, was an American. Thanks to Heaven for this inestimable blessing. His bold example infused enthusiastic ardor into every patriotic breast : Taught prudence to the brave, and bravery to the prudent : Instructed few

to conquer many. Encountering danger, sustaining heat and cold, watchfulness and labour, he gained for us that independence which we now celebrate. Hail! thou inimitable patron of our country, ornament of the world, and glory of thy nation! May thy great example teach future generations to love their country, and to defend their freedom! Historians, compare not WASHINGTON with *Alexander*, *Hannibal*, or *Cæsar*. Describe him in his proper character, himself a host in war, in peace a council. Silence, ye charynters of the Greek and Roman fame; reserve your lays to grace our great deliverer; for sure they cannot be destined to a nobler purpose. Let Greece, Rome, and modern republics, boast of great patriots, brave generals, good counsellors, and wise legislators: America alone can avail herself of an assembly of all these exalted qualities in the same person. She alone can boast of a WASHINGTON. But see this greatest of men, to shew that Omnipotence transcends human perfection, is fallen a prey to death—Yet nothing shall efface the memory of his greatness. Revolving ages shall revere his name, while friends to freedom have a place on earth.

But I forbear least my faint rehearsal of his exalted qualities, fully the brightness of his glory. AMERICANS! behold and imitate. Let your examples teach posterity the greatness of WASHINGTON.

An exhibition of his patriotic spirit, shall induce surrounding nations, rather to seek our patronage and friendship, than to oppose our strength. Cease not a moment to be useful, but like your WASHINGTON, do good continually. Imagine not that by being useful to day, you render yourselves less fit for usefulness to-morrow. For as the body by exercise is rendered more active, so the mind by administering wise counsels, encreases in wisdom. If you be am-

bitious of honor, or anxious for preferment, deserve it and it is ensured. Let patriotism direct your steps, and she will lead you through the path of virtue, to the summit of the hill of knowledge, where stands the temple of human perfection. Many there are who strive to gain this eminence, by climbing up some other way. But as the thief failed in his attempts, the sheep not listening to his voice, so shall these self-promoters, unsupported by the suffrages of the people, fall victims to their own ambition. This enthusiasm for preferment, manifests itself in a variety of ways ; often ⁱⁿ a false glare of patriotism. Persons thus affected, are through self-interested motives, the most watchful preservers of our liberties ; and when out of danger, are most zealous in their defence. May the number of these active patriots ever be limited. Others there are, who act a more cringing part, who are ever of the same opinion with the strongest party, and who are often changing political principles for the sake of promotion. Of these be aware. There is still a third class of false patriots, who have often made great disturbance in republican governments. These are a set of blood-thirsty heroes, who tremble not at destruction, and can face death with intrepidity ; who fight with vigor with or without a cause, but are more impatient of a private insult than a public injury. These fill a nation with internal discord, duelling, carnage, and destruction. They are perpetually kindling the blaze of war. Extension of conquest is the only blessing they prize. How long shall these misanthropists infest the world ? For though valor be an attribute of the patriot, yet when it is made the slave of resentment, it loses all connexion with patriotism, and degenerates into beastly madness.

But I say no more of the false patriot, his own conduct renders him sufficiently odious, without one disgraceful epithet.

Let us for a moment muse on fairer prospects. AMERICANS ! despair not. You possess the most extensive, most fruitful, and most flourishing republic now on earth. You inhabit a country abounding in true patriots, who are ever ready to defend their liberty at the expence of their own blood. You enjoy all the happiness of Lacedæmonean discipline without being bound by the strict laws of LYCURGUS. *Religion* and *Literature* walk hand in hand through our dominions, knocking at the door of every cottage ; teaching happiness, and wisdom, to all who will receive them.

Genius unrestrained, arises high on her expanded pinions, explores immensity of space, and at one glance comprehends millions of worlds.

Civilization seems triumphant over brutal ignorance. See industry, the support of our nation, preparing an asylum in our western states, for the reception of other virtues. The huge forest prostrates herself before her, the tall pines fall, but to rise higher in noble edifices. The stately church and academic hall, proclaim the liberty, the virtue, and the knowledge of Columbia's sons.

When could the world boast of a happier nation ? How can our orators amuse us with the ideas of still greater felicity ? What blessing can we desire which we do not enjoy ? Virtue reigns triumphant—Female innocence is unmolested—Peace and contentment gild the joyous scene. If we are unhappy it is because perfect bliss is not an earthly blessing.

I pass in silence the great expence incurred, dangers encountered, and blood of patriots shed, in the acquirement of the blessings of freedom. Oft has your compassion been excited by a rehearsal of these transactions. Nor shall I dwell on ADAMS and JEFFERSON dispensing those heavenly blessings with liberal hand.

I have now reminded you of the true principles, and duty of the patriot : it belongs to you to imitate him. You have by an exhibition of a true patriotic spirit, taught distant nations to fight for freedom : now by your example teach them to preserve it.

If you suffer not the standard of American liberty to be rent in pieces by the destructive hand of intestine faction, its salutary shade shall ever defend you from the fiery blasts of external invasion, and procure you the reverence, esteem, and friendship, of every good and virtuous nation.