

6
3
AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT SALEM,

ON

THE FOURTH DAY OF JULY, 1804.

IN

COMMEMORATION

OF OUR

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE.

~~~~~  
BY JOSEPH STORY, Esq.  
~~~~~

Where LIBERTY dwells there is my Country.

FRANKLIN.

SALEM:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CARLTON.

1804.

locked cabinet

TX
58870

Salem, 5th July, 1804.

DEAR SIR,

THE Committee of Arrangements return you thanks for your truly elegant Oration, delivered yesterday in commemoration of American Independence; and request a copy of the same for the press.

We are, Dear Sir,

Your Friends, and

Humble Servants,

JACOB CROWNINSHIELD,
HENRY PRINCE,
JOSEPH ROPES,
JOHN HATHORNE, JUN.
JOSEPH WHITE, JUN.

Committee
of
Arrangements

JOSEPH STORY, Esq.

Salem, July 6, 1804.

GENTLEMEN,

Your polite attention has my most grateful return. If the part which I had the honor to perform, in commemoration of our Independence gave satisfaction to my friends, I am amply repaid. I submit the Oration to your disposal; and I trust that it will not be considered an unmeaning apology to claim the candor of criticism for a composition which has been hastily written, under the pressure of business and ill health.

With the highest respect,

I have the honor to be,

Your friend and humble servant,

JOSEPH STORY.

Mess.

JACOB CROWNINSHIELD,
HENRY PRINCE,
JOSEPH ROPES,
JOHN HATHORNE, JUN.
JOSEPH WHITE, JUN.

Committee
of
Arrangements.

AN
ORATION.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

THE celebration of national achievements adds lustre to national character. It cherishes the spirit of emulation, and exalts the ardor of patriotism. It quickens into action every latent principle, and imbues the soul with the deepest coloring of national sentiment... Why has the Minstrel attuned his lyre to the toils of ancient heroism? His flowing eloquence, his varied pathos, and his rich expression, have entranced the attention of ages, and drawn tears of delight from the savage and the sage. Greece has not alone sung the battles of her warriors and the splendor of her art. Rome has not alone touched the sympathies, by unfolding the enterprizes of her patriots. On the banks of the Danube the voice of victory has swelled the festivity of the Vandal; and the music of the chiefs of other times yet echoes through the highlands of Caledonia. The tide of gratitude has flowed from sire to son; and

the spirit enkindled by valor has descended with the memory of its gallant deeds.

What more august occasion could have convened us together ! Other nations have celebrated the birth of a hero, or the apotheosis of a saint. We have a nobler cause for exultation... the triumph of Liberty. This day our country has reached the twenty-ninth year of her sovereignty and independence. It is worthy of the dignity of freemen to record in their annals the time of such admirable attainments. It is worthy of generous enthusiasm to immortalize the spirit which purchased the invaluable inheritance. If it were not due to the honorable wounds of our patriots, it were the prudence of civil polity to embalm the narrative of events which fixed the fluctuating destiny of ages, and established the rights of mankind on an imperishable basis... Deep in disgrace must they be sunk, who behold, unmoved, the monuments of their fame decay, and suffer the rank weeds of neglect to feed on the mouldering trophies of their valor. Such unalterable infamy belongs not to human nature but in its lowest degradation.

Should the time ever arrive when the solemn appeal, which this day once witnessed, shall be viewed with indifference or disdain... when the

sublime declaration, that America was free and sovereign, shall be deprecated as a paroxysm of political madness...well may we weep over the ruins of our country...well may we exclaim, in the holiness of classic lamentation, *Hic Troja fuit*. The forms of Liberty may remain, but the spirit will be lost forever. The Ghost of its departed excellence may moan and wander through our deserted capitol; but it will be an unreal mockery, "without a local habitation or a name."

Let no fear of such prophetic evils sully the pleasure of this assembly. The joy with which we celebrate this national jubilee, is an earnest of our future consistency. It pronounces to our fathers, that what their honor acquired, our intrepidity shall preserve; what their blood purchased, our gratitude shall redeem; what their wisdom reared as the temple of liberty, we will ornament and protect as the perfection of political architecture.

The causes which influenced, the principles, which guided, and the spirit, which executed the exploit, present glorious examples of virtue and perseverance. They accomplished a change, at once unexpected and perplexing to the cabinets of Europe. They displayed the novel

spectacle of a province shaking from its feet the chains of foreign domination, and assuming the imperial purple ; of a nation, rising in the majesty of youth, to encounter, confound, and enervate the counsels and the arms of organized authority. But this spirit, these principles, and these causes were not of momentary impulse. The experience of centuries had given them a maturity, which nothing could advance, and an energy, which nothing could resist. Persecution had stimulated virtue ; and virtue secured the triumph of valor.)

Our ancestors were truly the sons of enterprise. Having fled from the tyranny of religious intolerance, they sought in the uncultured wilds of America an asylum from oppression, and a heritage for their children. Nursed in an adversity the most trying, at a time when the rights of conscience were established by inquisitorial edicts ; when religious apostacy was decided by trials more absurd than Gothic ordeals ; when heretical convictions were enforced at the stake and the scaffold, with cruelties which might appal the heart of a Caligula, and arrest the purpose of a Suwarrow...nursed in such an adversity, they knew the full value of liberty, and liberally paid for the purchase. They esteemed conscience more than life ; and unfet-

tered poverty more than luxurious dependence. The pampered indulgence of sloth was in their view no equivalent for inglorious servitude. It was the bells and the trinkets of the African, which amuse his fancy, while they sound his disgrace and fester his sinews. The land which they explored was indeed no Canaan flowing with milk and honey, to sweeten the repose of wearied pilgrimage. The yell of the savage swept frightful on the blasts of night ; and the day star sickened at the desolation of the pestilence. Whom the tomahawk saved from its fury, the famine smote with disease ; whom the merciless winter spared from destruction, sunk under the hectic of summer. But a courage, which like the principles which inspired it, knew no ruler but heaven, added perseverance to zeal, and success to perseverance. The intrepid exiles gloried in their toils and secured the transporting triumph of liberty. They established rights, not on the prescription of ancient usage ; they established authorities, not merely on the chartered bounty of royal munificence ; they established a nation, not by the gradual usurpation of aspiring vassals on feudal feignories...but they established the whole on the legitimate basis of popular consent. No, Fellow Citizens, we were not like the convicts of Botany Bay, the planted colonies of domes-

tic humanity ; nor, like Ireland, the fraudulent conquest of a crafty enemy. We were not, like feudal Villains, attached to the demesnes of a Lord ; nor descended, like an heirloom, the heavy appendage of an imperial crown. We grew by the strength of native vigor ; we rose by the force of internal regularity, unfostered by foreign smiles and unaided by maternal protection until we became an object of jealous ambition. Like the oak of our own forests we were born and nurtured in a sky, which never knew the blight of oppression, or the engraftment of despotism. The soil cultivated by the labor, and the rights advocated by the voice of our fathers, were equally our *allodial* and unincumbered inheritance. They mortgaged no services to prerogative, and they claimed no equity from regal justice. Whatever Britain gained over our sovereignty was the mere right of power over infant weakness ; the silent though irresistible ties of a common origin, a common language, and a common sympathy. We submitted to her encroachments, because we were unable to resist them ; we wore her swathing bands, because we wanted strength to burst them.

These circumstances ought to be well recollected in order to ascertain the nature of our revolutionary contest ; and vindicate it to those

who have not ascended to first principles. Without these considerations we might be unjustly branded with the ignominy of a rebellion against the salutary discipline of parental authority. Miserable indeed would be the sophistry, and worthy of the dissoluteness of eastern servility.—The ties of the political compact, have no analogy with natural affinity. The remorseless parricide under every pretext is indignantly banished from society. In opinion, that no infringement of national right, no exercise of despotic vengeance, no oppressions of plundering cruelty, can justify a renunciation of sovereignty, is too absurd, too monstrous, too destructive, for the adoption of reason or honor. The furious zeal of an empress who could murder her husband, and the bloated ignorance of a Pope, who could anathematize a world, would shrink from a vindication of such atrocious doctrines. The gross obedience of the Russ, and the indiscriminate appetite of the Ecclesiastic, would loath the unseemly poison. They might swallow the dogma of transubstantiation; but no Jesuistry could win from their consciences, that political infallibility supercedes the laws of nature.

To the honor of Britain let it be remembered, that in her worst days this doctrine was never seriously assumed as the basis of her do-

minion over us. It can be found only in the black lettered rubrics of monkish folly, or the debasing catechisms of modern policy, more wicked in purpose, than contemptible in character. To make way for the grand promulgation of it, conspiracies of political demoralization have been conjured up; prophecies of impending ruin industriously circulated, the misshapen notions of a few fanatics organized into the principles of a new philosophy; and in fine, the mangled skeleton of Illuminatism, dug from the bowels of Germany, to fill up the cauldron of forcery and brew the ominous witchcraft... But I pause from the pursuit. The doctrine of political infallibility is now quietly buried in the same grave with papal supremacy. Should any unholy charm raise it once more to "revisit the glympses of the moon," we trust the genius of liberty will exorcise the fiend, and lay it forever in the Red Sea of oblivion.

A half century has nearly elapsed since the pride of Britain, unveiled and undisputed, first disclosed to our fathers, the extent of her arbitrary pretensions. It had been the prescriptive rule of her constitutional policy, confirmed by the charter of one monarch and ratified by parliamentary wisdom on the abdication of another, that the right of Representation was co-

extensive with the right of taxation...that life, liberty, and property were controlable only by juries in the Courts of Law, or by peers in the Courts of Legislation. This was the darling birthright of Englishmen ; fostered with unequalled solicitude ; felt and inculcated with catholic enthusiasm. It was bought by heroes worthy of the acquisition, and descended to a posterity worthy to preserve it. It was the unalienable privilege for which Hampden bled, and Sidney suffered on the Scaffold. If we were the subjects of England, this right was also our unquestionable inheritance ; if we were not, we possessed it from the bounty of nature. Yet in defiance of all principle, in opposition to all authority, she boldly advanced the doctrine, which subjected us to the dependence of a province, and the assumptions of a conquest.

The spirit of America kindled at the insolent pretensions. She was governed by a mild, but inflexible policy.—In tranquility, like the Christian charity, pure, holy, gentle, easy of access, without partiality and without hypocrisy. But roused to indignation, like Hercules, she rose in the freshened energy of youth, and strangled the serpents that usurped her cradle. To a mild petition for redress, an ambitious ministry returned an imperious, tho' ambiguous answer...to a modest statement of wrongs, they

replied with compulsory edicts, poisoned with the bitterness of sarcasm...to a definitive renou-
 strance of reason, they retorted menacing accu-
 sations, which converted the bitterness of sar-
 casm into the lustfulness of vengeance. The
 cup of reconciliation was drained to its very
 dregs... Our fathers saw that they must sink in-
 to the tameness of slavery, or assert the dignity
 of freedom by the sword and the bayonet. The
 habits, the sympathies, and the affections of
 life, forced on their minds the former alternative.
 On one side they beheld a nation, gigantic in
 power, abundant in revenue, and elate with re-
 cent victory ; with troops of hereditary valor,
 gallant in enterprize, and steady in discipline...
 On the other side they beheld a country divid-
 ed in councils, distracted by jealousies, and li-
 mited in resource ; undisciplined for war, but
 unused to submission.—The situation was
 fraught with perils. But life was the boon,
 and they exclaimed, with the generous Roman,
 “ a day, an hour of virtuous Liberty, is worth
 a whole eternity of bondage.” The awaken-
 ing ardor electrized every heart ; and surmount-
 ed every obstacle. The genius of our Country
 waved his banners in protection ; and the 4th
 of July, 1776, witnessed the solemn appeal to
 the God of Armies, that America would be
 free, or perish in the effort. Sublime Deter-
 mination ! Glorious Resolve ! It will remain

an eternal monument of honor to the Heroes who conceived it...it will remain a splendid example to latest posterity of what a handful of brave men can effect, when supported by the energy of independence. The character of human nature never approaches so near to divinity, as when struggling to preserve the rights, and accomplish the salvation of mankind. Our Fathers merited success, and they obtained it. They fought; they bled; they triumphed.----- From the perilous enterprizes of an eight years' war, they rose to the full possession of the best gifts of heaven, civil and religious liberty.

Fain would I drop a veil over the conduct of Britain during this momentous contest of the spirit of reason against the spirit of domination. Would it were possible to blot her mercenary cruelties from the annals of our history. But they must and will descend to future ages the disgraceful mementos of civilized barbarity. Let no one imagine that I think meanly of the British Character. I honor a people, whose Constitution has been for ages a solitary instance of jurisprudence, founded on the acknowledged rights of man. I honor a people whose munificence has patronized the arts, and given the sciences a liberal refuge from papal oppressions. I honor a people who, in their laws and manners, in their valor and enterprize, have discov-

ered a perseverance and illumination, which have blended speculative wisdom with practical grandeur. I wish it were possible to honor the humanity of their martial achievements, or the rectitude of their ambitious projects. Their lust for dominion has for centuries deluged the plains of Europe with blood, and disgraced the ocean with oppressive plunders. National justice has perished on the altar of pride, and even the sanctity of religion been prostituted to the support of ministerial crusades.

Moderation in resentment is not only the refinement of philosophy, but the dictate of nature. The polluted jealousies of national rivalry have too often sharpened the retaliations of cruelty, and stimulated the fury of the passions. The fatal projects of an EDWARD have unfortunately settled an hereditary hatred in the Inhabitants on either side of the English channel, which neither time, nor reason, nor generosity can subdue. But though as men we disdain to consult the indignation of accumulated wrongs; though as christians, we forgive the brutal revenge of our revolutionary foes, "we must remember such things were," and pass the wholesome lesson to posterity. Can we forget the time when, to glut this odious passion, our cities were wrapped in flames? our widows and children impaled on the bayonet? our wives and

mothers exposed to the merciless ravisher, or lost in the fury of contending elements?...Happy, thrice happy had it been, if but one CREUSA had perished in the tempests! Can we forget, that the tomahawk and the scalping knife were not beneath the research of martial policy? that the Indian warwhoop was the signal for the execution of deeds, "which freeze the young blood and harrow up the soul?" Can we forget, that prison ships, more sure in their purpose, though less rapid in their fatality, than the black hole of Calcutta, were the loathsome abodes of thousands of our injured uncomplaining countrymen; who lingered for months in the agonies of corrupted horror. Death had been sweet to them; but it came not to relieve till emaciated pestilence had exhausted every severity of torture. The affrighted Hudson "heard nightly plung'd beneath his fullen wave the frequent corse," till his waters thickened with the shining pollution. To this very hour the shrieks of the unburied dead roll on the blast of midnight, and accuse the ungrateful neglect of their country. Can we forget these things? No... We will forgive them; but posterity shall learn, that a civilized nation in an enlightened age has not been ashamed to record her infamy by such sanguinary stratagems.

While we mourn over these unfortunate vic-

tims, whose silent fortitude was denied its re-
 ward in the death of honor, let it fix in our
 hearts the mighty price of our political salva-
 tion. Shades of departed heroes ! ye who fell
 in the fury of the battle, and ye who perished
 in the poison of the prison...ye have not died in
 vain ! Sweet is the voice of your fame...The
 blessings of nations have swelled your requi-
 ems...the laurels of glory thicken on your se-
 pulchres...the gratitude of Liberty immortalizes
 your memories. Your children shall triumph
 in your deeds ; and by perpetuating the rights
 which you purchased, shall elevate the dignity
 of your achievements, and brighten the splen-
 dor of your renown !

Less grateful is the task to trace the history
 of later times, and mark the aberrations from
 revolutionary principles. Deeply is it to be re-
 gretted that any can be found, who, subservient
 to foreign influence, or subtle in insidious pur-
 pose, depreciate the rights which they enjoy,
 and stain their ancestry by apostacy and ingrat-
 itude. After fifteen years of the purest civil
 liberty, protected by a constitution admirable in
 design, and beneficent in operation ; after fif-
 teen years, in which commerce has guided to
 our shores the treasures of the east and west,
 and the arts and sciences been cultivated with
 an enterprize unequalled in success, it would
 seem hardly possible that any could be found so

lost to human dignity, as voluntarily to renounce these blessings, and ask an asylum under the dangerous protection of royalty. But Americans are to learn that ambition, like Mesfalina, thinks no prostitution beneath its boast, and no corruption beneath its communion.----
Lassata, necdum satiata, recessit; wearied, but never satisfied, it retires for a moment only to re-act its iniquities with renewed vigor. Terror and persecution after exhausting Europe, have been destined to cross the Atlantic, and roam from Altamaha to St. Croix. The rich and the powerful have been dazzled with the magnificence of courts, and the blushing ensigns of nobility. The prudent and the good have been alarmed with the dangers of experiments, which seeming to set every thing afloat, might overwhelm them in their progress. The veil of the temple of Liberty has been rent in twain, and the very altars devoted to sanguinary accusations.

On every side Republican institutions have been attacked. The quarrels and dissensions of revolutionary zeal have been artfully fomented and exaggerated. The order of despotism, a bloated carcase of unweildy disease, calm only from want of life, has been dressed in the robes of an Apega, though, like her, concealing in the ornaments of its bosom a poisoned dagger, it folds to corrupt, and embraces to destroy....

These events are not here recited to awaken indignation or extenuate error : they are recalled to your minds merely to shew that even innocence and virtue may become the deluded apologists of intolerance and crime.

Far be it from me to vindicate the atrocities which have sometimes disgraced the best of causes. The accusations, the banishments, and the savage perfidies which have crimsoned the Gallic annals, are deeply to be regretted by every friend of humanity and reason. They have left a stain on the altar of Liberty, which her vestal worshippers have scarcely washed away. But let those who have added the torch to the faggot, as well as confounded the principle with the action, let those respond to their consciences for the unholy horrors. Let them weigh against revolutionary woes, the massacres of Charles, the Siberia of Catharine, the cremations of Mary, and bloody persecutions of Philip. Let them decide if the oppressions and cruelties of ten centuries could be too fiercely retaliated. Let them decide if these accumulated wrongs could be redressed, but by the awful sacrifice of the innocent with the guilty.--- Alas ! the best cause cannot decompose the corrupt elements of ambition ; the worst cannot extinguish every gleam of virtuous glory. But doubly guilty are those, who, to subserve the

FILE NOT FOUND (FNF)