

AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Washington Benevolent Society

IN NEWBURY, VERMONT,

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1812.

BY JOHN WALLACE.

"O CONDITIONEM MISERAM, NON MODO ADMINISTRANDÆ, VERUM
ETIAM CONSERVANDÆ, REPUBLICÆ!"

WINDSOR :

PRINTED BY THOMAS M. POMROY.

1813.

NEWBURY, 4th July, 1812.

John Wallcut, Esq.

Sir,—In behalf of the *Washington Benevolent Society* of this town—we render you our sincere thanks for the ORATION you have this day delivered, and earnestly request a copy for the press.

With high esteem,
Your Brethren,

BEN. PORTER,
NATHAN M'KINSTRY,
ASA TURNEY,
ISAAC BAYLEY,
JOSHUA HALE,
JACOB KENT, Jun.
IONAS TUCKER.

July 4, 1812.

GENTLEMEN,

I am highly sensible of the honor you have done me, in requesting a Copy of my ORATION, for the press. To apologise for its imperfections would be unnecessary. You know the circumstances, under which it was written; to your disposal, it is cheerfully submitted.

With sentiments of high consideration,

Your friend, and Brother,
JOHN WALLCUT

BENJAMIN PORTER, Esq.
DOCT. NATHAN M'KINSTRY,
ASA TURNEY, Esq.
ISAAC BAYLEY, Esq.
JOSHUA HALE, Esq.
MR. JACOB KENT, JUN.
MR. JONAS TUCKER.

ORATION.

THE period we live in has been distinguished by remarkable events. The occurrences of ages have been collected within the space of forty years, and the history of centuries is surpassed by the annals of living memory. Fancy has given place to fact, and reality has usurped the empire of imagination. The future enquirer shall read the history of the present age with the same credulity, with which corrected reason now listens to the marvellous fictions of eastern story, or the legendary tales of chivalry.

If other times have furnished *some* grand achievements to fill a splendid chapter in the record of a century, ours have been emblazoned by a cluster of events, which distance precedent, as much as they defy imitation : The campaigns of antiquity are but little more than magnificent processions, or splendid parades, when placed in competition with the bloody destinies of modern war-fare—the plains of Marathon, famous as the arena of Grecian valor, and the tomb of a Persian army ; the fields of Pharsalia, celebrated as the closing scene in the murderous rivalry of Cesar and of Pompey, attract but a passing glance, when stretched on the same map with the encrimsoned fields of Marengo and Austerlitz. The boasted Alexander, in atchieving the conquest of the Eastern world, found nothing to resist his march, more formidable, than a rapid river, or a feeble and effeminate multitude, who fled in confusion from the bristly array of the Macedonian phalanx—the Corsican tyrant, in his career of desolation and con-

quest, had to contend with brave and experienced generals, with soldiers born on the "tented field," nurtured in camps, and inured to the perils and fatigue of arms. The revolutions of ancient times were generally counselled by the populace in a public square and effected in an hour; they usually consisted in the expulsion of a tyrant, or the assassination of a tribune. That revolution, whose glorious consummation we are this day convened to commemorate, was matured in the councils of sages, and accomplished by the labors of heroes; it was a scene of continuous and persevering aggression, of systematic and determined resistance. No perfidious crime of a cruel policy, no frenzied excesses of popular enthusiasm, obscured the lustre of its progress, or tarnished the splendor of its fame. No local attachments, no conflicts of jealous factions, divided the sentiments, or weakened the energies, of a patriot people. No guillotine was erected to exterminate an obnoxious party, no assassins were retained by suspicious power, in the foul works of midnight murder; but with one passion to animate, and one design to accomplish, Americans sought no enemies, but the enemies of their country; they hunted no track for blood, but the *unhallowed footsteps of their invaders*.

It would be an useless task to recapitulate the events of the revolutionary war, from its tragical commencement at Lexington, to its auspicious termination at Yorktown. The perils and triumphs of the eventful struggle are familiar to all. The historian has given it his proudest page, the poet has embellished it with the richest offerings of genius, and the scar-covered veteran, the living oracle of the "times that tried men's souls," has, a thousand times, rehearsed the patriotic story to the listening circle at your evening fire-sides, when he recounted the exploits of his youthful arm, and

"Shoulder'd his crutch, and shew'd how fields were won."

The magnificent theme is incorporated with the rudiments of education—it is studied with the avidity of youthful patriotism, and cherished with the ardor of *national pride*. May our revolution never cease to awaken feelings of proud recollection in every American bosom; and tho' the time forbid to enter upon the detail of its progress, we pledge ourselves to cherish the spirit, which produced it, and to maintain the firmness, which sustained its trials.

The French revolution, the base and bloody progeny of American independence, will ever be memorable, as a dreadful epoch in the history of civil government. *Some* of its events afford inexhaustible themes for admiration, *many* for pity, *more* for horror, and *all* for astonishment. Thirty millions of people, arisen by unanimous impulse from the *slumber of ages*, to emancipate their rights from the *prison house* of despotism, opened a magnificent scene to an anxious and wondering world. The patriot predicted, from its sublime and ferocious features, the extinction of arbitrary and unfeeling power—the philanthropist greeted it, as the auspicious dawn of better days for oppressed humanity. But its august origin afforded a doubtful presage of its horrible progress. It soon became a cauldron for the ebullition of the malignant and ferocious passions—an “open hell ringing with blasphemies and crimes, and last, though not least,” from the awful struggles of the “nation’s travail,” a peaceful and gigantic genius was ushered into *light* and *life*, to curse the world by the propagation of opinion, and to desolate Europe by the ravages of his arms.

Napoleon Bonaparte is synonymous with every thing great, or infamous. Fancy quickens her wings to keep pace with the rapidity of his course, and language labors for epithets of abhorrence, to sketch the character of his crimes. No sooner invested with the command of an army, than he pursued his

way to Rome, and covered with blood the classic fields of Italy. He crossed the Hellespont, and spread the terror of his arms among the distant Mamelukes. Thrice has he entered Germany with his plundering myrmidons, and thrice has he tinged the waves of the Danube in blood. Poison and poignards have swelled the mass of his resources ; and so boundless have been his views, and so rapid his career, that the throne of the Bourbons afforded no rest to his labors, no repose to his toiling spirit. Restless and inexorable, no tear of pity ever bedewed his cheek, no sigh of compassion ever escaped from his iron heart. The groans of the dying is the only music, that invites his ear—streams of human blood are the only objects, that gladden his vision. No matter what the subject of his operation, or the field of his exertion ; wherever his pestilential influence extends, it paralyses and destroys. He is an enemy alike to virtue and to vice, and like the ruthless destroyer of animated nature, his only element is devastation. He has dethroned Kings, and enslaved republics ; he has changed the opinions of private life, and the maxims of State policy ; he has reduced the venerable institutions of national law, into a contemptible juggle of inoperative words ; he has removed the land-marks of morality, robbed the citizen of his patriotism, and the christian of his hope. He has plundered Italy—subjugated Switzerland—purchased Germany.—paralyzed Russia—ruined Holland—and carried misery, murder, and rebellion into every section of continental Europe. America, though separated by an ocean from the turbulent scenes of the Eastern continent ; though she has never been compelled to enter in arms upon the bloody arena of European conflicts ; distance has not protected her from the intrigues of foreign cabinets, neutrality has not exempted her from the privations of war. The year '93 was the ominous era when a

class of men who felt or effected to feel a disaffection to an Administration, of which the illustrious Washington was President, first made their appearance with organised ranks and concerted schemes.—The opposition to the British treaty, that treaty, which in the limited period of ten years, advanced the United States almost a century in wealth and power, opened the first scene in the drama of revolution. The piece has since been hurried on, through all the forms of tragic plot, till at length, the awful catastrophe of our country's ruin, seems past the efforts of human power to avert. During the administration of Mr. Adams, this opposition was not confined to memorials and resolutions—some sterner stuff had entered into its composition, and had given it the features and attitude of treason. An excise on whiskey gave an additional impulse to party feelings, and aided by the fostering passions of Mr. Gallatin, opposition grew to rebellion, and caucusses were kindled to insurrection.

In those days of terror, it was not treason to express our opinion of men and measures, nor was he pointed to a halter, who did not subscribe to the creed of the officers and placemen of the day. The stripes and stars of American commerce were fluttering in every harbour, and our shores were laden with the productions of every clime. Our citizens were protected *at home*, our rights were respected *abroad*.

Yet these halcyon days could not satisfy the wayward spirit of the times. The disordered optics of some, magnified a stamp on paper into the mystic characters of monarchy. An army of 12 thousand men; with Washington for its leader, ordered to be raised in times of turbulence and tumult, when French depredations were sweeping our commerce from the ocean; when our French Minister had corrupted the Secretary of State, and another had de-

nounced the government with a rebellion of the people ; when our courts of law had decided that we were in a state of actual hostility with France ; such an army, under such circumstances, was represented by many as the willing and formidable engine, that was to bind a nation in chains.

An amelioration of the common law, investing the citizen with the right to offer the truth in evidence, when arraigned for a libel on his rulers, was exclaimed against, as a most outrageous infringement of the liberty of speech. But “ men change with manners, principles with times.” The accession of Mr. Jefferson to the Presidential chair, was greeted as an event auspicious to the future destinies of America. His inaugural speech was received, as the indubitable omen of our future prosperity, and his admirers could only view, with half-closed eyes, the dazzling perspective of American greatness. The odious distinctions of party were to be abolished—the spirit of war was to be exorcised from the world. America was to procure justice by her moderation, and homage by her magnanimity—the people were to live without labor, and the government subsist without taxes. Commerce was to pursue “ her march o’er the mountain wave,” unmolested, at least, by government restrictions, and we were promised a system of policy, which should render “ equal and exact justice to all nations, entangling alliances with none.” That these unclouded prospects have not been realised, past events, and the present deplorable situation of our country, afford a melancholy confirmation. No sooner had Mr. Jefferson received the seals of office, than he adopted a system of political proscription, that may challenge a comparison with the most profligate exercise of party virulence. Integrity and talents seemed only to invite persecution—and many were displaced from office, whose locks were hoary with state experience, whose bod-

ies were covered with the scars of revolutionary service.

Whether the hostility, that has so long prevailed against American commerce originated in the notions of Virginian planters, or in a borrowed zeal in administration, for the freedom of the seas, it is not at this time material to inquire—that commerce expired in the hands of a republican administration, an impoverished seaboard, a suffering country can tell. It is, however, a memorable fact, that in the message recommending the first embargo, no mention was made of the orders in council. So soon as their existence was known, they were pressed into the service of administration, to swell the number of its fictitious causes.

We are not assembled, my fellow-citizens, to become the apologists of British wrongs. That these orders are incompatible with the neutral rights of America, is an unquestionable fact. It is equally true that they were issued subsequent to the Berlin and Milan decrees, and that the Prince Regent has officially declared, that they shall cease to operate, so soon as the edicts of France shall be unconditionally repealed.

That the Berlin and Milan decrees are not repealed, is a fact too notorious for the most zealous partizan of France to deny. But admitting, that they have been rescinded, admitting that the whole mass of evidence which confirms their outrageous operation is nothing but a federal fabrication; can you find in the list of British wrongs, one so wantonly oppressive, so flagrantly unjust, as the Rambouillet decree? In the language of Mr. Monroe, it was “a most unjustifiable aggression on the rights of the United States, and invasion of the property of her citizens.” By this decree, not less than thirty millions of American property have been confiscated to the use of the imperial treasury. Yet in the detail of

injuries which the United States have suffered from foreign injustice, no mention is made in Congress of the Rambouillet decree. When French aggression is the theme, no resentments are kindled into reproach—no war is talked of, for the vindication of violated rights—complaint is softened to apology—and murmur is hushed to silence.

Could we retrace the progress of time, and place ourselves in the memorable year '98, and view as in some prophetic dream the present melancholly situation of our country, we should call the vision, the wild workings of a disordered imagination, and shudder at the picture which secrecy had sketched.—Had the patriots of that proud period been told, that in fourteen years, the friends and companions of Washington would not be found in the national councils, that our treasury would be exhausted, our commerce annihilated, a war with England declared, and an alliance with France inevitable; he who should have ventured a prediction of the fearful prospect, would have lost his character for reason, and secured himself a residence in a *hospital for the insane*. But, alas! the fulfillment of the prophecy, could now furnish an evidence of his sanity, and a credential for his manumission.

America is already unloosed from her peaceful moorings, and a war of uncertain duration and doubtful issue, opens a prospect, so dark and dreary, that through its fearful blackness, no eye can discover a haven of safety, no prophetic finger can point to a refuge from the "desolation of the storm." The rocking of the billows will only convince us that we are tossed on a tempestuous sea, and the lightning of artillery will only expose the forlornness of our situation, as its commotions gleam on the desolate course. There are many among us who look with complacency on the scenes that are opening, and affect to believe, that the march of our disciplined and

invincible regulars, will be only a military pastime, as they pursue their unmolested journey into the interior of Canada. The Indian is to retreat in dismay to the western forests ; the oppressed Canadian is to greet them with acclamations of gratitude, as they pass his cottage ; and the magistrates of Quebec are to await, with unclosed gates, the arrival of their deliverers from British tyranny.

Notwithstanding these sanguine expectations, the route of our armies may not be a path of roses,--the place of their destination may not be a garden of bloodless laurels. The people of Canada, as well as the exclusive patriots of our own country, claim the merit of some little attachment to the government which guarantees the protection of their lives and liberty. If, like us, they have not had the power, the virtue, or the firmness, to separate themselves from the British empire ; they have not, like the United States, groaned under the tyranny of the continental system, nor have the venal and unprincipled pimps of the custom house been retained by their rulers, to hunt down the traveller, or break open his dwelling for plunder.

Patriotism is a plant of spontaneous growth. It vegetates as richly in the frozen regions of the north, as in countries, that embrace a more genial climate. The poor Canadian feels its influence as warmly, as the slave-scourging demagogues in the southern States. The pride of country, the odium of cowardice, and the shame of defeat, will not permit him to slumber in his cabin, when the tocsin of invasion is sounded on his borders. It is not for us to deceive ourselves by the facility of anticipated victories, nor suffer ourselves to be disheartened by detailing obstacles of fictitious magnitude ; but if invading troops shall pass the frontiers of Canada, the blood of their fellows may serve as a beacon to guide the vengeance of the pursuing savage ; and if they cross

the trenches or scale the walls of Quebec, it may be on a bridge of dead and dying besiegers.

Our defenceless seaboard and our western frontier will experience early and disastrous effects of the wicked policy of administration. In six weeks after the declaration of war shall have reached the Court of St. James, the floating castles of Britain will shake our coasts with the thunder of their cannon, and afford us an evidence of the ravages of war, in the smouldering ruins of every sea-port from Nova-Scotia to the mouth of the Mississippi.

Indian resentment will not slumber, Indian ferocity will not be passive, amid this scene of devastation and ruin. The tomahawk and scalping knife will be incessantly employed in the work of assassination, and a thousand bodies of the victims to savage cruelty, shall float down the streams of the Ohio and the Wabash. Could they find their way to the waters of the Potomac and carry to the city of Washington the ghastly evidence, that America was bleeding, and the wishes of Frenchmen gratified, it might stay the tide of corruption, and yet save the country from the chains of Bonaparte.

But desolated coasts, ravaged frontiers, and bleeding armies, dwindle into the character of ordinary calamities, before the silent—the portentous gloom of *French Alliance*. Before that sickning prospect humanity droops and hope expires—America should recede from the fraternizing treaties of France, as an impenitent and dying criminal would shrink from the chill embrace of the grisly messenger of death.

If there is yet a passion-blinded partisan who denies, that an alliance with France would annihilate the liberties of the United States, let him read, with emotions of sympathetic horror and ominous dread, the history of modern Spain. The conduct of France in relation to the court and people of Spain

outvies every instance of private treachery—every example of perfidious policy—and that man, who boasts the privileges of a freeman, and does not accord his sympathy to the suffering and struggling Spaniard, richly deserves a Bastile for his abode.

Spain had long been the obsequious ally of France—her troops had bled in the ranks, her treasures had supplied the armies of Napoleon. The mines of Potosi surrendered their gold to the claims of the Imperial finances; and in the memorable battle of Trafalgar Spaniards and Frenchmen fought and fell in concert—French and Spanish fleets were shattered and sunk together. Yet this subserviency was insufficient to satisfy the rapacious ambition of Bonaparte. He sent his emissaries to Madrid and corrupted a party to his interest; he decoyed their rightful sovereign to Bayonne and immersed him in a dungeon—he extended his withering arm, and bad his conscripts, go, and, like the locusts of Egypt, they carried havoc and waste through the fertile fields of the peninsula. But God be praised, the ravages of these cannibals have once been checked. The glory has been reserved for Spain, a people sluggish and supine, who have for centuries taken no efficacious part in the politics of Europe, but in subserviency to foreign cabinets, to oppose the first dyke to the billows of French invasion.

The tempest that lowers in the north has suffered the peninsula to respire from her struggles, and encouraged new hopes for the emancipation of the Continent. Russia may yet succeed in paralysing the tremendous power of France. Her nobility retain the proud spirit and the martial ardour of feudal times. Her serfs are numerous, loyal and brave—just in that middle state between barbarism and civilization, which furnishes the fearless and desperate soldier. In all her campaigns, Russia has acted a brave and brilliant part; though the jealousies that

ever prevail in coalitions have soiled her efforts. — But Russia, invaded, will be harrassed by no clashing interests. No contest for a division of the spoil will divide her councils and disconcert her schemes. Their domestic altars will invigorate the spirit of her people, his diadem will animate the exertions of her youthful sovereign.

With such feelings to impel him, and such means to annoy, Alexander may yet “tear the laurels from Luxembourg’s brows.” But victory has so long attended the standard of France; the hopes of humanity have been so often defeated by the evil destinies of an hour, that we can but cautiously indulge the expectation of an event, of such momentous interest to the civilized world.

Whatever may be the event of European contests, it now becomes our duty to unite our exertions, in bringing the war with Great Britain to a speedy and honorable conclusion. But the way-ward policy of administration, have reduced the United States to open hostilities with the brave and magnanimous people who have so long contended for the liberties of Europe—that people who have so long, singly and alone, withstood “the destinies of a conflict with a world in arms,” we pledge ourselves that we will never submit to the damning consequences of French alliance—we solemnly swear, and call upon the sainted shade of Washington to record the oath, that the last Republic on earth, shall never be drained of her sons, to bleed in the ranks of the French conscription.