

Doctor Respected
AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, 1798,

AT ST. PAUL'S CHURCH,

BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN

OF THE

CITY OF NEW-YORK,

ASSEMBLED TO COMMEMORATE THEIR
NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE.

By JOHN WELLS, Esq.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY M'LEAN & LANG,

1798,

AT a meeting of the Committee appointed to act generally for those YOUNG MEN of the City of New-York, who have pledged themselves, and are ready to turn out at a moment's warning, in support of Government, held at Hunter's Hotel, on Thursday, July 5, 1798.

ON MOTION,

Resolved Unanimously, That Anthony Bleecker, John M. D. Laurance, and John E. Seaman, present the Thanks of this Committee to JOHN WELLS, Esq. for the seasonable and patriotic Oration delivered by him before the Youth of this City on the 4th Instant; being the Anniversary of our National Independence, and to request of him a copy thereof for publication.

By order of the Committee,

Signed,

WILLIAM H. ROBINSON, Chairman.

AN ORATION, &c.

IN common with the People of America, we are once more met in commemoration of THAT DAY, the recollection of which must awaken all the feelings of American pride, and call forth those noble energies of the soul, which governed our FATHERS in the Declaration of that Independence, which it will be the ambition and boast of her Sons to maintain.

A people, at stated periods, publicly recognizing the origin of their NATIONAL EXISTENCE, and the establishment of their SOVEREIGNTY, affords a spectacle no less interesting than useful. Contemplating the free spirit of our country—acquainted with her rights—resisting the first encroachments of unauthorized power—struggling against injustice, though, unequal to the combat—and determined, at every hazard, to oppose the lawless invasion of her liberties—the warmest interest is excited in her fate—the strongest joy in every success, and the severest sorrow in every defeat.

HAPPILY

AN ORATION.

HAPPILY for us, the firm zeal of our councils, and the undaunted prowess of our arms, enable us to review the first periods of our national history with THAT PRIDE, which results from the consciousness of having sprung from ANCESTORS, who, *disdaining* the restraints of colonial dependence, NOBLY DARED BE FREE.

FREQUENT recurrence to first principles, will always be attended with advantage—observing them in all their original purity and force, their value and importance will be impressed on the mind, and we will be better enabled and disposed to correct their abuse or corruption, to renovate their vigor, and enforce their observance.

In this view, the ANNIVERSARY we are NOW CELEBRATING has its *peculiar* use: it reminds us of the virtuous enterprize of our ancestors—their high opinion of the blessings of CIVIL LIBERTY—the full enjoyment of their unimpaired rights—their *solemn determination to perish with their country, sooner than become the ignoble vassals of domineering power*, and teaches us, in the most emphatic language, the duties which we owe to our country and posterity: and accursed be that spirit, which is so far sunk in *poverty*, that does not catch the generous enthusiasm from their *inspiring examples*, and SWEAR that such shall
FOR

FOR EVER be THE CHARACTER of AMERICANS!

IN the history of man, so few are the epochs distinguished by their favorable influence on the liberty and happiness of our race, that they may be considered rather as extraordinary departures from the established course of things, than those which placed man in his proper condition in a state of Society.

THE fluctuations and revolutions in Governments, have generally been the struggles of contending factions for ascendancy, contests for the sceptre of power, in which the PEOPLE have occasionally been used as machines without sharing in the glory or advantage of success, or meeting with sympathy or compassion in defeat. The result to them has been a change of Rulers without any addition to their happiness. *Individual ambition*, and not *public good*, being the purposes to be answered, the flush of victory has rather served to exasperate resentments, than moderate the passions—and the PEOPLE, *deceived* with the hope of better days, have not unfrequently found their burthens increased, and their miseries enlarged—little consolation has it been to them, that after the tumultuous storms of internal convulsions, the returning sun of peace and order, has only exhibited a new
race

race succeeding to the throne of departed masters. Little cause have they had to mark those epochs as the returning seasons of national festivity. They have not produced to them, in common with us, those sources of congratulation which enliven recollection—which shed the cheerful beams of happiness on all around—which mark the exultation in the greeting countenance—and proclaim the **FREEDOM OF THE PEOPLE**, the justice of their laws—the excellence of their government—their *confidence* in its *administration*—their *attachment to their country*, and the orderly submission of all classes to its rightful authorities.

THE few nations in the transatlantic world, who have enjoyed *any portion* of civil liberty, have not unfrequently smarted under its loss; and with great difficulties, regained that of which their indolence or folly had deprived them. Their charters of re-acquired powers and privileges, have been crimsoned with the best of blood, and their confirmation obtained by the force of arms. The national character has been re-established only by a display of valour, equal to the weakness by which it had been lost; and the turbulent field of battle, instead of the peaceful council, has been the theatre on which the *rights of the people* have been traced by the point of the sword, and confirmed by the armour of war. They have been wrested by violence

lence from the hand of that usurpation, which they themselves had suffered to be raised over them ; and from the continued exercise of which, nought but the returning spirit of the NATION could have saved them. Their history, therefore, through its chequered varieties, constantly presents that picture of instability, which pourtrays the character of a people not uniformly watchful of their liberties, and regardful of their rights—although they may find occasions for the exercise of an honourable pride in the intrepid conduct of their ancestors ; yet, it will not be unattended with chagrin and mortification, that spirits so capable of greatness, should at any time, be found to have so far forgotten themselves, as, slumbering on their posts, to betray the citadel confided to their charge.

HOWEVER great therefore the pleasure may be to them of commemorating THOSE DAYS which have marked the *dignity* of *national character*, yet is the festivity clouded with the sad remembrance of servile meanness, or the most condemnable indifference—if *glory* dazzles on the one hand, its *splendor* is diminished on the other. The occasional establishments of their liberties, are rather to be considered as the results of favorable accidents, than the fruits of any uniform system of rights.

BUT, our progenitors who first settled this country, brought with them those *genuine principles of liberty*, which have governed it since its first establishment. They understood thoroughly the *rights* which belonged to the PEOPLE, and those which pertained to their Rulers. They had not learned those *deadly doctrines* of MODERN LIBERTY and EQUALITY, which by destroying all distinction, robs the magistrate of his power, and the people of their reason. Educated in the wholesome school of *English jurisprudence*, they acquired those rational maxims of *civil liberty*, which will forever serve as the PROPS and ORNAMENTS of the society in which they are cultivated. They prized too highly the blessings of *self-government*, to submit to the smallest exercise of undelegated power. Their proud spirits would not brook the approach of *tyrannical authority*, though cloathed in the commanding garb of *parental right*. They refused to clank their chains to the nod of *any master*, or bend their necks to any yoke, however light or easy the burthen. Adhering to *these* principles, and determined to support them at the hazard of *their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor*, that revolution, whose commencement we are *now* celebrating, was originated and completed.

OUR fathers then presented to the world an example of *greatness, wisdom, and zeal*, which are
unequaled

unequaled in the annals of man, and which must do honor to America, as long as intrepidity and virtue shall have a votary on earth.

HAVING at the close of our revolutionary war, established a character as a *brave, free and independent people*, no nation ever rose into notice, under more auspicious circumstances. And since the establishment of our federal government, no nation has improved to more favorable advantage; the opinion which had been formed of us, and more rapidly increased their happiness, prosperity, and respectability.

THE people of this country, have abundant cause therefore to felicitate each other on the early and uniform opinion they have displayed of *liberty* in its *rational sense*—of the industrious care with which our ancestors first established it—of the zeal and bravery with which our fathers defended it—and the pious solicitude with which they have transmitted to our hands a reputation unstained by dishonor—unfaded with baseness.—A crisis has arrived in our affairs, in which the question is to be *solemnly determined*, whether we WILL continue to maintain *this honorable, and independent character*, or fix upon it an indelible disgrace, by submitting to become the tributaries of a foreign power. FRANCE has advanced propositions, and made demands upon this country, which, if once acceded to,

will

will *annihilate* the *dignity, honor, and independence* of the nation.

THE point now to be decided, involves in it no less than our NATIONAL EXISTENCE ;—for its destruction has been threatened, unless we comply with terms compatible *only* with the most degraded state of vassalage. There can be no *American*, true to the interests and honor of his country, who can, for a moment, contemplate, with patience, the *disgraceful* alternative—who does not feel every nerve braced for OPPOSITION, and, EVERY DROP OF BLOOD FLOWING WITH REDOUBLED VIGOR!

IF any wretch can be found so base as to desert his country, in the hour of danger—to shrink from the service she may require of him—or still to be the *advocate* or *apologist* of an implacable and overbearing foe, a *mark* should be put upon his forehead to single him out as a fit object for the execrations of his countrymen, the detestation of mankind, and the *everlasting curse of his God*.

By the conduct which the PEOPLE of this country shall now adopt, will be determined, perhaps, forever, whether a nation can long exist under a form of government, *purely republican* : if it should be found that, in the short lapse of twenty-two

ty-two years, *domestic faction*, co-operating with *foreign intrigue and influence*, have so far succeeded in the profligacy of their schemes, as to over-awe the councils of our country, to rob them of their energy, and deprive them of their power, as it would forever disgrace our national character, so it would have a tendency to cast such an odium on the very system itself, as would in all probability, forever deter any further experiments on the same plan.

THE honor of our government, therefore, is now at stake; its character about to receive a stamp that it will forever carry, of firmness and dignity, or imbecility and meanness; and the country is called upon for its united support that the *independence*, which has been atchieved, may be preserved, and continue to prove *our strong hold in times of national trouble and difficulty*. It will otherwise serve no other purpose, than to have elevated us to a rank among the nations of the earth, to become more conspicuously the object of public contempt—to be pointed at with the finger of scorn, as a people boasting of their superior virtue, and enlightened freedom, *without the courage and resolution* to defend them against the attacks of the *most awful tyranny which has ever threatened the earth*.

BUT,

BUT I cannot indulge the ungenerous suspicion, that *such* will be the fate of my country. I will rather cherish the nobler belief, that my countrymen, animated with one common spirit, will produce to the world A SECOND and MORE GLORIOUS instance of their unshaken determination to LIVE *a free and independent* people.

THOSE who still survive our revolutionary war, who took a part in its interests—who shared in its glorious and honorable fatigues, know too well the value of their hard-earned labours, to suffer them to be snatched from them without an effort for their preservation—And the YOUTH of AMERICA, roused by the resentments, and animated by the *example* of their FATHERS, will present a bulwark to their country against *foreign invasion and domestic faction*.

THE independent spirit of America will thus maintain our national character free from blemish, and perform one of the *first and most sacred duties* a country owes to itself, and which no seasons of policy or convenience should ever prevent it from exercising—Without self-respect, how are we to obtain it from others—without an erect and dignified conduct at home, how are we to command it abroad?

abroad? The importance to the community, of national *pride* and *honor*, cannot be too deeply impressed—they are the best guarantee of our *independence*—and the safest security against aggressions.

THAT people, who, on all proper occasions, give unequivocal proofs of their fixed determination never passively to submit to injustice and insult, and who possess the power and determination, at all times, to repel their approach, will be much less subject to *provocation*, than such as by the pusillanimity of their councils—the cowardice or weakness of their citizens—are known to possess dispositions that will *temporize* with *disgrace*, and *compromise* with *dishonor*. A nation which will once stoop to such meanness, will find that her pacific dispositions will be attended but with little advantage: if she should fatten upon her disgrace, she only makes herself the surer spoil of some more daring foe.

THESE remarks are drawn from the *present situation* of our country, which loudly calls for the exercise of VIGOR and FORTITUDE in every description of people, to *maintain and support the constituted authorities*, our *sovereignty and independence*.

THE republic of FRANCE, towards whom we *once* felt the liveliest regard—in whose fortunes we took the warmest interest—and in whose prosperity we gave the most unequivocal proofs of joy, has repaid those flattering tokens of respect and esteem by a series of injuries, insults and contumelies, the recollection of which, must excite, in every *American bosom*, the warmest indignation, and the keenest resentment.

OUR *nation*, yet in infancy—our *government*, not yet matured by experience—nor strengthened by practice—our *commerce*, extensive and unprotected—our *country*, recovering from the struggles of our revolutionary war, our population rapidly encreasing—our *property*, rising in value—the *industry* and ENTERPRISE of our citizens, amply rewarded, ALL combined to render PEACE too desirable a condition to be lightly departed from.—The councils of our country have accordingly, with unremitting assiduity, *sought to heal the differences* which have existed between the two republics by *reiterated attempts at honorable and amicable negotiation*—by a fair and candid discussion of facts, to place the conduct of our government in that upright and independent view, which comported with national faith, and national interests. But, our ministers of peace have been *rejected with scorn*,
and

and their offers of conciliation with *contempt*. An appeal to the justice of our claims has been treated with *ridicule*—our ambassadors have been denied their diplomatic character, and even a permission to discuss our complaints, except upon terms which suppose in the character of the American people, a degree of *abject meaness*, no less wounding to our pride, than insulting to our understandings.

WHAT! The free-born sons of AMERICA become the vassals of France!—surrender their sovereignty at the first summons of an insolent foe!—tarnish their dignity, and forever disgrace the character so bravely won!

To what purpose have so many rivulets of blood flown—so many valuable lives been lost, to establish our Independence, if it is now to be *sacrificed* at the *polluted shrine of French rapacity and dominion*. The wounds are scarcely healed which were acquired in the establishment of our liberties—the ground is scarcely cold, which was enriched with the blood of departed patriots—the groans of the dying soldier, who nobly fell in the defence of his country, are still tinkling upon the ear, when we are called upon to abandon our *Independence and sovereignty,*

sovereignty, gained by the calamities of a seven-years war—And this, not as a compensation for injuries done—not as an atonement for offences committed—not for the improper or profligate use of our national powers; but, for the high crimes of *asserting* and *maintaining* our right to self-government—of choosing for ourselves the position most profitable and advantageous during the European conflict, and preserving it with honour and good faith—of forming such compacts as we thought best calculated to settle past differences, and secure the observance of justice in future—of taking such measures as would enable us to steer a course clear of the tempestuous sea, by which Europe has so long been agitated!

CAN any American be found who can *patiently* contemplate this *dictatorial* and *insulting* conduct on the part of FRANCE? if there be, let him be told, in addition thereto, that if their demands are not implicitly complied with, they have threatened to overwhelm us with *fire*, with *sword*, and with all the horrors of *Domestic Faction*—to *divide our Union*, to *crush our Government*—and parcel us out among the powers of Europe, as their pleasure or convenience may dictate!—If the passiveness of his temper is proof against *this*, he is a disgrace to the land which gave him birth—Nay, to any land but that which is ruled by a *French Directory*.

WITH

WITH views thus hostile, which have been unequivocally declared to you, and which are now known to the world, can any man hesitate between a *peace*, which at one blow annihilates every thing sacred to us as a nation, or *war*, accompanied with every difficulty which imagination can trace, in defence of our liberties—our constitution—religion and laws.

RECOLLECTING the occasion on which we are met—the high example set us by our *FATHERS*—it shall never be said that the *YOUTH* of *AMERICA* are so far sunk in slothful degeneracy, as to be indifferent to the fate of their country—to be idle and unconcerned spectators of the gathering cloud, whose aspect speaks destruction—and whose burst upon our unprepared heads, will leave us in ruin.

MANY of us, my young friends, during that war, which established our Independence, were yet in the cradle of infancy—our youthful arms were not yet strung for war,—our nerves not yet braced for hardy action; but the first sentiments with which our infant bosoms glowed, were the love and honour of our country, and the first wish we were taught was, *that we had been able to fight by the side of our fathers.* They have now grown old, and to us devolves the sacred trust
of

AN ORATION.

of maintaining that Independence, which they, with so many glorious toils acquired.

LET us fully display the *true American Character*—mild and forbearing in peace, proud and powerful in war; for it is not now to be concealed that our only safety is in the UNION and VIGOR of our *councils*, and in the strength of our ARMS. It is by the weapons of war, that we are now to enforce that justice, which we have sought for with the most unfeigned sincerity, or that we can even maintain our internal government and sovereignty.

THE rapacious *monsters* of France have breathed their pestilence over Europe—marked their footsteps with desolation and destruction, and covered the land on which they have trod, with the blood of the just and the tears of the innocent—with the Syren song of *pretended* liberty, they have enchanted the ear, and intoxicated the brain of their deluded votaries, until they have made them the fit instruments of every species of *sacrilege, murder, rapine and violence*, which can heap disgrace on the name of man.

NOT satisfied with the progress they have made in Europe, they are about to traverse the Atlantic; and our country is doomed *next* to grace the
the

AN ORATION.



the triumphs of their arms.—Already have they boasted of their means of sedition—*the divisions of the people*—and the strength of their party.—Already have they disclosed to us *our fate*, by reminding us of that of *Venice*, to which we ourselves may add the afflicting examples of *Genoa*, *Holland*, and *Switzerland*.

NOUGHT, therefore, is left for *us*, but by a vigorous preparation for *war*, either to avert its evils, or be enabled to meet them with proper resolution and advantage—a war which will involve in its issue every thing which can be sacred to us as men, and valuable to us as citizens.—Let us, therefore, no longer indulge in the idle dreams of conciliation—in the deceitful hopes of negociation—but rely on our own strength for the maintenance of our *rights*, and the redress of our *wrongs*.

UNDER the administration of an executive, who has nobly declared that his hand shall never sign the ingnominous deed, which shall surrender the sovereignty of his country, we may trust our most unreserved confidence.

THIS is the temper which should animate every *AMERICAN*, and which would establish our *INDEPENDENCE* beyond the power of the universe.

In

AN ORATION.

In competition with *that*, wealth, ease, and private convenience, should be held as nought. Determined to live a free and sovereign people, let every exertion be made, every arm be raised in defence of the country—and, if it *must* fall, *let us perish with it*—let no one survive the disgrace—let no one live to be told that the spirit of America was subdued.

IF this solemn determination be **THIS DAY** taken, relying on the just providence of *our God*, *our Independence* will still be saved—its value will be enhanced—and our posterity will feel the increased duty of preserving an inheritance gained and transmitted to them with so much blood, toil; and difficulty; and *we*, ourselves, may live to see our country *Triumphant, Honoured and Respected.* 9 : 7 : 49

FINIS.
