

AN
ORATION,

PRONOUNCED

AT GRAY, (MAINE,) ON

THE

ANNIVERSARY OF

American Independence,

JULY 4, 1809.



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NOTE BENE.

IN permitting the following very hasty production to appear in public, the author has no other apology than a wish to gratify his friends; at whose request it was delivered, and who have solicited a copy for the press.

AN ORATION.



WASHINGTON, FRANKLIN, HANCOCK, ADAMS—names like these will ever be dear to real Americans. These men, with their venerable copatriots, are justly styled the *Fathers of our country*.

Nor shall the names of WARREN and MONTGOMERY, those first martyrs of Columbian Freedom, ever be forgotten on this joyous anniversary. Such patriots and heroes were our political saviours. They were the instruments used by Providence in laying the foundation, and erecting the noble fabric, of rational liberty—of American Independence.

While, with pleasurable emotions, we welcome the return of this our national birth day, the memory of departed worthies demands, and shall receive, the grateful tribute of a tear. When we forget their labors and toils we prove ourselves unworthy to enjoy the rich inheritance they have bequeathed us.

Hail, auspicious day! Thy return shall ever awaken, in our breasts, the liveliest sensibilities. On this anniversary, sacred to Freedom, ascriptions of fervent gratitude shall ascend to the supreme

governor of the universe for his kindly interpositions. In times dark and perilous He made bare his arm for our relief. When aspiring tyrants aimed a deadly blow at our inherent rights, He gave our patriots fortitude to resist their lawless claims. When they attempted to enforce their unrighteous mandates with the sword, He breathed into every bosom a warm and ardent zeal for liberty, and a manly heroic valor to defend her injured cause. Though few in numbers,—though unskilled in the arts, and destitute of the implements, of war, under the auspicious smiles of the God of armies, we sustained an eight year's contest with the most potent nation in Europe ;—we at length compelled them to yield to us the palm of victory, and, with disgrace, retire from our coasts. “Had not the Lord been on our side, when men rose up against us ; then they had swallowed us up quick.”

Our civil privileges are indeed far superior to those of any other people. Our national prosperity has surpassed even our privileges. While most nations bow to the mandates of a haughty despot, or submit to laws, framed by men born to rule, we may appoint our own rulers. Our laws are made by men who are themselves under the controul of law. Our lives, our property, all our rights are safely secured by wisely established constitutions, by just and equitable laws. Our political well being is entrusted to our own hands, and submitted to our own disposal. While we zealously support our constitutions of government, and conscientiously adhere to the laws of the communi-

ty, our liberties will be secure. So long as we regard our moral obligations and cherish the republican virtues, so long our nation will be prosperous and happy. But,

It is an irrevocable decree of heaven, that a vicious and immoral people shall not long enjoy exalted blessings. We receive our freedom as a legacy from our fathers. They made immense sacrifices of blood and treasure to secure to us the rich inheritance. Our constant and watchful exertions are necessary to preserve the sacred treasure, and transmit the same unsullied to succeeding generations. Should we basely neglect to preserve and improve our patrimony, it will ere long be wrested from us, and the execrations of millions, yet unborn, will be justly heaped on our memory.

Liberty has many enemies : enemies who are ever watching to procure her destruction. Crowned heads, tyrants of every description, will continually seek to drive her from the earth. So far as they can obtain influence in our nation, they will endanger our freedom. Every friend to his country will watch, with the most scrupulous jealousy, the first advances of this secret, but deadly poison.

It has been common of late, for each of the parties, into which our nation is unhappily divided, to accuse the other of being actuated by foreign influence. If the charge is well founded, it is a very serious consideration. Whether the charge is, in any degree just, or not, we shall not pretend to determine ; but would indulge the hope, that none

will afford any grounds for such recriminations. *He* must be unworthy the name of American—*he* must be a vile traitor to his country, who can suffer his mind to be biased by such base considerations—who can prefer the interest of a foreign country to that of his own. But,

Our freedom has of late been much more endangered by an intestine foe. The fell demon of party has stalked, with gigantic strides, through the land, scattering a baleful influence all around, and poisoning the very air with his pestilential breath. Hence our public councils have been distracted, and the harmony of the domestic circles destroyed. Neighbors have beheld each other with angry looks, while envy and revenge rankled in their bosoms. The father has been at variance with the son, and the son with the father, and a man's foes have been those of his own household. From the same cause the freedom and purity of our elections have too often been prostituted. Instead of selecting men for their distinguished talents and virtue (the only proper qualifications) a man's prospect of promotion has sometimes been in an exact ratio with his exertions in the cause of partyism. Such has been the zeal in some instances, that a man, however honest and faithful, could not gain an election to the humble office of *Hogreeve*, unless his political creed would, in every iota, exactly tally with that of the dominant party.

These things have cast a dark shade over our political horizon, and “eclipsed the sun of American glory.” This spirit, if cherished, will at length

overthrow the fair temple of freedom. The weaker party will ere long be crushed by the stronger, and some aspiring demagogue obtain the absolute direction of the whole. Intestine broils and contentions destroyed all the republics of the old world. The republics of Greece and Rome, while united at home, were unconquerable by external foes—their liberties were secure. But when faction arose, and partyism became the order of the day, the fair goddess of freedom took an eternal flight. On the very spot where stood the renowned Temple of Liberty, despotism is erected and holds his iron throne. Shall we cite modern France? She would hardly be called a republic, though for a while she assumed that honorable name. The genius and manners of her people were such, that she was unable to shape a steady course on “the tempestuous sea of liberty.” She soon foundered; and, to avoid total ruin, threw herself into the arms of a Corsican Usurper. The history of former republics, is a beacon pointing to our danger, and warning us of the causes which proved their ruin.

Human nature continues the same. The same causes will produce the same effects. The same providence, which overruled the affairs of ancient nations, now superintends all events in the political world. If America follows the example of ancient republics, she must inevitably share in the like destruction.

We will not, however, dwell on this unpleasant theme, but rather cherish the fond hope that partyism, in this country, has arrived at its acme.

Have we not some grounds for the belief, that honest and reflecting men, of both parties, are growing weary of base and puerile contentions? That they are beginning to realize the pernicious effects of such conduct? That they will now cease to fan the fire of contention, and lend their united influence to promote the true interest of the nation? Should this be the case, partyism must soon subside, and internal peace again return. For notwithstanding there will always be unprincipled men, ambitious to obtain the honors and emoluments of office, who will not cease their endeavors to raise a "political whirlwind," that they may rise into notice; yet, so long as they are unable to delude honest men to aid their exertions, it is presumed they will not, in any great degree, endanger our liberties.

Every citizen, who is deserving the appellation, will highly esteem his right of suffrage, and will by no arts be led to trifle with this most important civil privilege. He who prostitutes this sacred deposit, is the destroyer of his own happiness, and a procurer of evil to others. For if thereby base and unworthy men are raised to office, he, in common with others, must endure the unhappy consequences. Every one then, who regards his own, or his country's good, will use his endeavors that those raised to high stations be men of approved integrity, of exemplary virtue, as well as firm patriotism. When men are constitutionally elected, he owes, and will grant them, a rational, candid, a liberal confidence. But,

As "all power is derived from the people," a good citizen will never relinquish his right to examine the conduct of rulers, and to express, with freedom, his opinion of the justice or injustice of every measure. If we yield this essential republican right, we renounce all claim to freedom, and permit the legislature (should they be base enough to do it) to rivet, on our necks, the chains of abject slavery at their pleasure. When compelled from principle to censure any measure, the good citizen will do it with modesty, and support his censures by fair argument. He will never have recourse to misrepresentation or falsehood; nor will he, except in very *extreme* cases, encourage opposition to an unjust law, until constitutional methods for procuring its repeal have proved ineffectual.

It will add to the joyous emotions, awakened by the return of this anniversary, to reflect on the returning prospect of our country's prosperity. By the concurrence of various unfavorable circumstances, our commerce, one prime source of national aggrandizement, has for a time, been almost wholly suppressed. One portion of our citizens have thereby been driven from their employments and deprived of their customary support, while all classes have been sharers in the general calamity. The scene is now changing. Matters appear to be in a train for an amicable adjustment with that nation, with whom we have the most extensive commercial connections. We would anticipate the pleasing prospect as not far distant, when our commerce shall regain her wonted vigor, and our canvass be unfurled on the most distant seas. Will not the

remembrance of past evils, teach us more justly to estimate our national blessings, while it excites humble gratitude to God, that his corrections have been so much less than our unthankfulness has justly merited ?

The proper business of this day, is to bring to remembrance the toils, the dangers, the exertions, of our revolutionary patriots ; to express our devout gratitude to God, that he enabled us to repel the tyrannic impositions of the British cabinet, and assume a name and a rank among the nations of the earth ; to offer up our thanksgivings to the Ruler of the universe, that under his smiles we are established in the enjoyment of high and exalted privileges, both civil and religious ; and humbly beseech him to continue his merciful regards to our common country. On this day, then, all party considerations are laid aside—all party feelings suppressed—all party names forgotten. Each one feels a noble ambition in claiming the honorable title—AN AMERICAN CITIZEN. Those who may come forward this day, to exult in the success of their particular sect—to heap slander upon, and utter invectives against, their political opponents—to excite and inflame the angry passions, do greatly wander from the path of patriotism ; they are far from meriting the above honorable title. They give ample proof, that the triumph of a party, is dearer to their souls, than the prosperity and happiness of their country. From such *pretended* patriots, “ may the good Lord deliver us.”

The celebration of this anniversary will be useful so far, and so far only, as it excites within us a veneration for our Constitutions of Government, and for those Worthies, who have labored in establishing and preserving our Independence ; so far as it revives that pure, generous glow of patriotism which in times of peril, warmed every heart ; so far as it awakens and cherishes a serious and devout gratitude to the King of heaven for his providential care of our beloved country.

Let every American, on this day, renew his oath of allegiance, and repeat his vows to support our constitution, and adhere to our laws. Let each devoutly resolve, to lend his whole influence, to diffuse useful knowledge among the rising generation, as the only sure method of perpetuating the privileges of civil and religious liberty. Especially, let each engage to labor for the promotion, and study to inculcate the practice, of real religion, of pure christian morality, as the only solid basis of civil and social happiness.

May that pure, ardent love of country, which glowed in the breasts of our fathers, when they dared to resist the unrighteous claims of Britain, continually flourish in every American bosom. Heirs of a valuable inheritance, may we duly appreciate its worth, and transmit the same unimpaired to our successors. May the Sovereign of the universe continue to exercise a fatherly care over our common country : under his gracious smiles, may our peace and prosperity be perpetual, and Columbian Freedom continue till time shall be no more.