

AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED AT

GRANVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS,

JULY 5th, 1813,

IN COMMEMORATION OF

American Independence:

AT THE REQUEST OF THE

YOUNG GENTLEMEN OF THAT TOWN.

BY JAMES COOLEY.

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1813.

IN behalf of the Young Gentlemen in Granville, assembled for the Celebration of AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE, we return thanks to Mr. JAMES COOLEY, for his elegant and patriotic Oration pronounced on the occasion, and request a copy that it may be printed.

ALPHEUS GIBBONS, }
OHEL SPELMAN, } Committee of
LYMAN ROOT, } Arrangement.

GRANVILLE, Ms. July 5th, 1813.

ORATION.

To the human mind, nothing is more instructive than the vicissitudes of time.

Weeks, months, and years, roll on, unfolding to our view the revolutions of empires; the wreck of Republics and the annihilation of States.

Every day is big with important events.—*To-day*, a nation exists; the rulers wise and the people happy.—*To-morrow*, their liberties are cloven down by the demon of faction; an usurper arises, and the traces of their happiness are no where to be found.

If we turn over the page of history and examine the records of centuries, we shall there find the solemn memento of human instability.—The ancient cities of Assyria and Egypt; those vast monuments of human grandeur, are mouldered to dust.—Jerusalem and Babylon, Balbec and Palmyra, are scarcely known but in the delineations of the historian.

Those places which were once animated by living multitudes, are now a picture of solitude and desertion. The solemn silence of death, now reigns where tumultuous throngs once crowded the streets; and the knell of their departed glory has long since ceased to vibrate.

The scenes have changed—where power and opulence once waved their banners; poverty and wretchedness hold their residence. Vast cities have given place to despicable ruins; and the revolutions of time have transmitted their grandeur to other climates.

Three hundred years ago, this fair country which we inhabit, was unfrequented by civilized man.—Where the savage cannibal skulked among the trees of the wilderness, chanting the frightful war-whoop to the echo of the woods; we see cultivated fields, and fragrant gardens, smiling with all the beauties of nature, and glowing with the most luxuriant vegetation. Where the rude natives groped in ignorance, and bowed the knee to imaginary deities; our eyes are now dazzled with the splendour of churches, where the God of nature is recognized, and every social virtue inculcated. The paths of science which were then shrouded with a spontaneous gloom, are now disenrobed of their dusk, and their portals are expanded for the universal reception of its votaries. Then, the American youth were taught the adroitness of the scalping knife, and all the fell arts of cruelty and revenge; now, they are early initiated into the *Arcana* of science, are taught the page of history, and can touch the lyre of Orpheus, or speak with the tongue of Apollo.

Our worthy ancestors, a small and feeble band, harassed by the oppressive acts of the mother country, fled to these inhospitable wilds, to enjoy uninterrupted the charms of liberty and religion—They preferred civil liberty, freedom of conscience, and a cave in a gloomy desert, to the horrors of despotism, though fed with luxuries, and clothed with all the brilliancy of the east.—They chose to commit themselves to the ocean, and wander at large amidst storms and tempest; rather than sacrifice their religion and liberties to the unjust usurpations of royal authority.

Guided by that "*cloud and pillar,*" which led the Hebrews from the fetters of Pharaoh, they arrived in safety to these solitary shores. Nature received them with open arms and joyfully pressed them to her rugged bosom.

Their primitive privileges were few. No cabin to shelter, no friend to receive and welcome them;—surrounded by dangers, formidable, and extreme, and exposed to all the insults of savage barbarity!

Through the trying scenes of famine and pestilence, and while experiencing the cruelties of their infuriated neighbours, they discovered that inflexible fortitude which feared no perils, which regarded no danger.

By their toils and perseverance; by that industry which liberty inspires, they rapidly increased to a degree of population and opulence which commanded national respectability.

The King of Great-Britain viewed the rising power of his colonies with a jealous eye.—Fearful that they might at some future period bid defiance to his laws, he commenced a system of measures the most oppressive and unjust. They reasoned, petitioned and remonstrated, but without effect. The commands of the British Cabinet at length became open and peremptory. Unconditional submission, or chastisement, was their mad and unfeeling language. But America awoke to the recognition of her rights;—her flinty brow sparkled at the strokes of oppression, and kindled a flame of patriotism which the minions of unauthorised power could not extinguish.

Europe beheld with astonishment, an infant nation; unskilled in military tactics, unacquainted with the detestable arts of human slaughter; and destitute of pecuniary resources or the means of war; rise in opposition to the well appointed forces of a powerful empire. The mighty armies of Great-Britain were called forth to crush and chain us.—The "*fiery meteors*" of royal vengeance streamed through our atmos-

phere.—The clouds of war gathered blackness.—The tempest of battle burst over our heads!

Here let us call to our imaginations the capital of our State crowded with hostile foes—her temples plundered by an unrestrained banditti—her altars polluted, and the peaceful ceremonies of religion driven from the sanctuary!

On the heights of Bunker-hill the bloody tragedy was commenced. This is the preface to the melancholy tale. A volume of awful incidents was here disclosed. There, fell WARREN, the pride and boast of America—His youthful heart, animated with holy ardour, led him to the field of battle.—The shafts of death selected him for their victim.—The ground on which he fell became consecrated by his blood, and the mourning genius of his country robed in “sackcloth and ashes” wept at his tomb.

At Long-Island, York-Island and New-Jersey, our little band of heroes braved every danger with a stern and stubborn fortitude. On the fields of Trenton, the precarious clouds of despondency hung over them in dread suspense. Chilled by the cold blasts of winter—dismayed by disaster—their ranks thinned by desertion—their spirits paralyzed by scenes of calamity and distress.—*A dubious and critical moment.*—The elements seemed embattled against them—the winds blew and the storms raged—the Delaware rolled furiously with floating ice and forbid the approach of man—phantoms, ghastly and fell, flitted around their camp—all was horror, consternation, gloom, and despair.

WASHINGTON, self collected, viewed the surrounding scene. He saw in imagination, his bleeding country on the brink of annihilation. A flame, like the electric spark, from the altar of Patriotism, ran through his soul. His lips, re-inspired by the “God of Sabaoth,” awakened at once the ardour of his troops. Re-animated by the voice of their belo-

ved leader, they rushed to the hostile shore.—They fought—they conquered.

The morning sun rose cheerfully on the American camp—the clouds of darkness were dispelled—shouts of joy and exultation sounded along the ranks, and the glorious enthusiasm of victory pervaded every breast.

On this event, the destinies of our country wore a favourable aspect. The brightest gem in the British diadem was started from its socket. *America had determined to be free*—the fire of Patriotism became unquenchable, and the spirit of liberty, powerful and universal.

The armies of Great-Britain had discovered in the American soldiery, that adroitness in arms; that military skill and enthusiasm, which they little expected to find in their infant colonies.

In the “lawns of Princeton,” and on the “strong grounds of Morristown” our troops taught them a lesson which time never will eradicate. The “vales of Brandywine” and the “fields of Germantown,” were witnesses of our superior prowess; and on “the heights of Saratoga” were performed those deeds of valour and heroism which an admiring world beheld with wonder and astonishment.

There the heroes of “*the new world*” plucked unfading laurels, and immortalized their names. There they shed their blood to achieve our freedom, and establish that liberty and INDEPENDENCE which we this day celebrate.

To commemorate this epoch in the annals of our nation, we are now assembled. On this fair jubilee the “sainted shades” of those heroes who bled in the conflict, will re-visit the scenes of their gallantry to participate in the festivities of the day.

We are not convened, like the vassals of imperial despotism to celebrate the birth-day of a King; or to pour forth shouts of fanaticism at the triumphs of anarchy. A more exalted theme inspires our minds.

We hold in sacred remembrance *that day* which unmanacled a virtuous people from the block of despotism, and established a new empire in the world, founded on the broad and substantial basis of *justice and equal rights*.

In bursting from the grasp of our oppressors, in rending asunder "that bond which kept us pale," justice was our guide, reason our pole-star.

Here was no demon of anarchy to spread the pestilence of civil war;—no frantic parricide to bear in triumph the head of his father, streaming with blood from the guillotine, to testify his patriotism;—no usurper to leap into the whirlwind, and rise to power on the ruins of his countrymen.

We boast no cities laid in ashes to commemorate the downfall of government, no provinces desolated to mark the flaming path of "*equality*;"—no blood of butchered clergymen crying from the ground for vengeance—no "*republican baptisms*"—no change of the sabbath for a "*Decade*"—no blasphemous devoirs to the "*Goddess of Reason*."

Far nobler triumphs are ours. True wisdom; affection for the soil, habits, and moral ordinances of our ancestors, presided in our Councils. Native valor, firm and deliberate, commanded in the field, and led us to that Independence which we so justly commemorate.

Thirty years have now elapsed since the struggle in which our Independence was gained, was happily and honourably terminated. During the first and greatest portion of that time, we enjoyed a season of the most unexampled prosperity. "The Sun of Liberty" rose upon our nation in all its majesty, and its enlivening beams gladdened and fertilized the remotest corner of our country. The aspect of despair had given place to the sunshine of joy.

From humble Colonies, unknown in the annals of history; scarce bearing the name of a civilized people; we became "a free, powerful, and independent nation."

The industry of the people had converted a wilderness into a garden. The savage wilds and uncultivated deserts, were made to "blossom as the rose." The barren heath was clothed in all the charms of primeval Eden; those arts and refinements, which civilize and soften our natures, every where prevailed. Commerce flourished. Our flag, honoured and respected, played in every breeze and waved in every sea. No country so distant, but reciprocated our friendly intercourse. No billow so remote, but bore upon its bosom the testimony of American enterprize. Wealth flowed in from a thousand redundant springs. The rich harvest of commercial assiduity had swelled our national coffers with abundance, and the honourable acquisitions of our citizens diffused plenty and happiness into every portion of our country.

"Liberty abroad"

"Walk'd unconfin'd ev'n to our farth'rest cots,
"And scatter'd plenty with unsparing hand."—

The Nymph of Peace, with sweetest minstrelsey, sung around our dwellings; and soothed and charmed and tranquilized our firesides.--"Every one sat under his own vine and figtree without ought to make him afraid."

But, alas, my countrymen; how changed is the scene! "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people. How is she become as a widow. She that was great among the nations, how is she become tributary. Her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they are become her enemies. All her gates are desolate. Her children have gone into captivity. The adversary hath spread his hand upon all her precious things,"—The deep and ancient root of our prosperity is withering. The hand of ruin is upon us. The Sirocc has overtaken us!

Cast your eyes over the whole extent of our union, and you behold a scene of discontent and animosity. A spirit of

disaffection and uneasiness prevails throughout our wide spread community. The harp of the Poet that chanted so sweetly the charms of Liberty and Independence, is "Hung tuneless on the willow," or strung to the melancholy murmurs of grief and despondency. The busy hum of industry which sounded along our shores, is stifled into a dreary silence. Our harbours and store-houses which were crowded with the avails of American enterprize; present to the eye, the disgraceful imagery of poverty and ruin.

The waters that were whitened with our canvass; the seas which were covered with our ships, bearing from every climate its richest products, bear scarce a trace of the American name. To complete our wretchedness, a war has been declared, and we have unfurled the bloody banner, against a peaceful and unoffending neighbour. "The broad Phalanx of death" is marching through our land. The innocent and necessary employments of agriculture, are to give place to arts of rapine and deeds of blood. Our citizens are dragged from the peaceful pursuits of domestic life, to perish without remembrance in unwholesome camps; or die ingloriously in the wilds of Canada.

Why, my fellow-citizens, are we brought to this abject state of things? Why are the wings of the American Eagle clipped in its soarings? Why is this great commercial nation reduced from that high pitch of wealth and glory to which it was so rapidly advancing, to this abyss of poverty and wretchedness?

In the year 1801, the government of the United States passed into the hands of a new Administration. Thomas Jefferson being elected to the presidency, that course which our venerable sages had pursued with so much success was changed. The plain and beaten path to national glory, was forsaken for the devious wanderings of *moderna philosophy*.

A new course was taken; a new system of things adopted; and all those distinguishing traits of national greatness which characterized the administration of Washington were swept away.

The consequence of promoting sycophants to office, and the probable result of their measures, had been frequently and impressively pointed out to us.

From the desk and from the forum; from the oracles of wisdom in every part of the country, we had been exhorted to beware of those men. We were told that if such characters presided in our Councils, our happiness and liberty would fall a prey to their evil machinations. We were most solemnly enjoined to put no confidence in such men. We were conjured as we valued our happy privileges, to adhere to our former rulers. But the Syrens of democracy hovered over and bewildered our senses. Fatal visions floated in our imaginations. Public virtue fell into a sad relapse.—Credulous and languid; we passed on, unheeding our footsteps, till we plunged into the abyss that lay yawning before us.

But, my countrymen, there is a redeeming spirit yet remaining in our Constitution, which may “drag up our drowning honour by the locks,” and restore us to our former happy attitude.

The right of electing our rulers, is yet left to us. Let us exercise that right cautiously and independently. Let no sordid or partial considerations ever influence our suffrages. To our God and to our country we are solemnly accountable for the prudent and conscientious improvement of this inestimable privilege. Let us place no confidence in men of polluted characters.—“Can men gather grapes of thorns? or figs of thistles?”

In selecting candidates for places of trust and responsibility, we ought to have our eyes upon the faithful of the land;

men of integrity and moderation, who will allay the spirit of discontent, and soften and calm the resentments of conflicting parties; those who seek the interest of their country rather than the interest of a party.

The finger of reproof points us to the fallen Republics of the East.

History tells us how they *rose*, how they *flourished*, and how they *fell*. A voice from the tomb of WASHINGTON "loud and deep," admonishes us to shun the fatal catastrophe of our sister republics.

"Bankruptcies incurred, have often been retrieved;—ships lost can be replaced; Moscow burnt to ashes, may be re-built; but *Liberty* once lost is gone forever."

The changing seasons of the earth produce a succession of life and death in the vegetable kingdom; the falling leaves of autumn are seen to be renewed in the ensuing spring; the bars of the grave will be broken, and the dead will arise again; but, alas! there is no resurrection from *National death*.

Let us hastily tread back the unpropitious steps which have hurried us to the brink of ruin.—Let us return to the principles and manners of real republicanism.—Let us know our own dignity; practice industry, frugality, moderation and the whole train of real republican virtues, and we may yet restore to our citizens the felicity of former times.

But if we continue listless in the fatal charm that hangs upon our senses, we may brood over our miseries in silent agony; our destinies are sealed; our republic is at end, and we may bid "*farewell, a long farewell to all our greatness!*"