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AN ORATION,
Delivered at the United Celebration at
Shepherdstown, on the Potomac,
July 28, 1814; on the late
Glorious events in Eu-
rope.

BY JOHN H. THOMAS, ESQ.

THE prayers of the righteous are fulfilled. The sufferings of innocence are assuaged. Painful anxiety gives place to devout exultation. Fidelity is relieved of its apprehensions. Danger is now past of the worst and most degrading of all evils. An overshadowing spirit of mischief and pollution no longer sits embodied in the highest seat of earthly domination—it is put down, and thrust out of the strong hold, from whence it lately issued against every civilized region, under the form either of guile or of force, going about seeking whom it shall devour. The fatal source of peril is stopped, which threatened to deluge the world with torrents darkened and acrid with iniquity. That proud, aspiring trunk, lately flourishing as the green bay tree, is withered and hewn down, which supplied and sustained its branches of corruption, widely and variously spread through neighbouring and distant climes. In the imposing guise of tempter and destroyer, a baleful protracted, and mighty agency, has, at length, terminated. The arm of heaven has been, at last, visibly stretched forth in pity to release Christendom from servile terror and impending bondage. The thunder of retributive justice has rolled over the oppressor. The lightning of its vengeance has struck the iron crown from his guilty head. Nations have risen from a long night of debasement and misery. The convulsions of a troubled world are subsiding. The frightful gloom is over. In the ascendant we behold the serene influence of moral order once more appearing. The social system is renewed, illumined with benevolence, and vivified by hope. The ways of God to man are vindicated on earth. Man again is free. The earth rejoiceth, and all the ends thereof are glad.

Elevated by this bright spectacle, we look back with amazement upon the past. We seem just to have escaped from a fearful and feverish dream. Providence has cast our lot in a period of the world the most eventful in all history. The year 1789, the era of the organization of our national government, was also the epoch from whence are to be dated those direful commotions in Europe, whose progress we have beheld shaking the political frame of the old world to its centre, and involving the peace, the harmony and well being of this new empire. In the first stage of the revolutionary proceedings in France, a generous delusion became universal in her favour, wherever the tidings were announced; and in this country, as was naturally to be expected, public sympathy was most powerfully excited in the fate of a people, recently connected with us in bonds of a memorable alliance, who now appeared to be engaged in an arduous struggle for the establishment of their own freedom. From the gulph of calamity, to which the delusion would have led, this infant republic was then saved, almost against its will, by the tutelary care of Washington (ever blessed be his memory) the wise and faithful guardian of its safety and honor. The error, indeed, which had been common to all, soon vanished from the minds of the most intelligent and reflecting. It soon appeared that what had been mistaken for the genius of liberty, was, in truth, the demon of licentiousness, goaded into phrenzy by a pestilent and restless atheism. Its character became distinctly marked in staring capitals of blood. The hell-hounds of murder and pillage were let loose. All that was great and good, reputable and sacred in France, was given up a prey to indiscriminate slaughter and rapine. And, as if to draw

down the special chosen curse of heaven upon their heads, an unoffending monarch, the mildest, and once the best beloved in the catalogue of their sovereigns, distinguished for his benignant devotion to the welfare and wishes of his people, the virtuous and pious Louis the XVI. the friend of our forefathers in the day of their distress, was hurried with his injured wife to a contumelious death, amidst the curses of a people, for whom his heart yearned with parental affections; of a people whom we have since seen submitting their necks in ignominious bondage, to the vilest and most atrocious despot that ever trampled on the human race. To depict the various deeds of complicated cruelty and horror, perpetrated in France, under the abused name of philosophy and republicanism to trace the miseries inflicted on surrounding nations; the plot of wickedness against the peace of mankind; the rise and the fluctuation of factions, emulating each other in carnage and insanity, would lead us to a direful contemplation, from which the heart recoils with disgust. It is sufficient that we have all witnessed the result, confirming the experience of all ages; that the appointed end of anarchy is military despotism.—A people thus distracted and depreaved, are glad at last to escape from their own iniquities, and willing to take refuge from themselves, under the dominion of an absolute master. The people of France were accordingly prepared by every degree of suffering and enormity for the endurance of the usurpation of a fortunate adventurer, who, at a critical juncture, favourable to his flagitious purpose, returned, like a fugitive thief, from his army in Egypt. On his part, with a mind hardened to cruelty, and practised in every species of abomination and fraud, assisted by the most skilful and profligate agents of his will, he was duly fitted and prepared to establish a system of obdurate tyranny, the most grinding and intimidating to its immediate subjects; the most hostile to the happiness and liberties of the world. It was indeed a system of intense operation on the minds, as well as the bodies, of men, which seemed to possess the power of blasting, at pleasure, whatever it assailed; of undermining, seducing, contaminating and destroying. The military code, by which it was upheld, subjected the whole mass of the population, the entire physical strength of the land, as an engine of machinery, to be wielded in the hands of the remorseless man. Its internal police, with swarms of emissaries and spies, assuming every shape, and penetrating into every recess, stifled the very faculties of nature writhing under the agonies of tortured servitude. A monstrous phenomenon presented itself in the political and moral world. Truth was not hereby suppressed for occasional purposes of State;—the press was not enslaved and perverted into an instrument of deception;—but a regular organization of falsehood, entering into every device and arrangement of policy, assumed all the prerogatives of truth, and imposed an implicit belief which the multitude were bound to admit even against the evidence of their own senses. The influence of this part of the system, the most perfect of its kind, extended itself, in a greater or less degree, to every quarter of the globe, seeking proselytes, and finding imitators and adherents.—The entire system was a pestilence that walketh in darkness, diffusing contagion over the fair face of nature, bewildering the understandings and polluting the souls of its victims. The consequences are not to be described, although they were every where seen and felt. The name of Buonaparte, fatally familiar to every tribe and tongue, wrought, through a long & gloomy period, like a charm of diabolical incantation on the rulers and the ruled. The aspirations of virtue were dismayed at that sound; helpless innocence cried in vain for mercy; neither rank, nor sex, nor age, nor condition, could expect a mitigation of the general doom: that flinty heart was closed against the compunctious visit-

ings of conscience; humanity sighed and mourned over fallen millions, whose secret groans and execrations were every day ascending to the throne of eternal justice, to bear witness against their blasphemous desolator; while the lofty arrogance of his misrule, every where exalted the pretensions of congenial vice, rendering him the homage of venality. France itself might be considered as the carnal-house and temple of the modern Moloch, described by the Asiatic traveller. There sat in sullen pomp the crafty Napoleon, the object of a shameless and dreadful worship.

—“Horrid king, besmeared with blood
“Of human sacrifice, and parent's tears.”

His Imperial Car of triumph moved, like the tower of the idol of Juggernaut, over the mangled and quivering limbs of the expiring nature;—his was incense inhaled from the pangs of bereavement, and the screams of the widowed and fatherless; his burnt offerings arose from the conflagration of cities and the explosion of states; his libation was of the purple stream of life; the dogs & vultures of prey were attendants on his orgies; the earth around was strewn with bones, as spoils dedicated to his lust of domination; while extorted acclamations, enveloping on all sides his stupendous throne, silenced the murmurings of complaint, and denounced terror to dissimulation.

Of the schemes of Foreign conquest, achieved and planned by the foul Corsican, it is unnecessary to enter into any recapitulation. He seemed about to realize the wildest project of universal empire hitherto entertained. With a fury more unquenchable than that of “Macedonia's madman or the Swede,” he had subdued the larger portion of Europe to his direct control, and exercised a sinister influence over the remotest part of that continent. Intoxicated by his tremendous career of success, he conceived his power at last to be irresistible;—and it is manifest, not merely from his profane imposture, addressed sixteen years ago, from Cairo, to the disciples of Mahometanism, but from the whole tenor of the language of adoration, in which he required himself to be approached by his own fanatics; by the dignitaries of his own clergy, and by that mock Sanhedrim of the Jews;—it is palpable that he meant to ascribe to himself the attributes of the Deity, or, at least to be regarded as an elect vicegerent of almighty power, destined to reduce to his rule, by fire & sword, the utmost bounds of the habitable earth. For a time, his nod seemed to shake the spheres, and people, principalities and potentates were humbled in apprehensions at his frown.

From this appalling and humiliating sight, at which “hope was sinking in despair,” let us now turn our eyes, and behold and adore the goodness of the ever living God, who, in that moment of exultation to the wicked, and depression to the faithful, was pleased to lay the foundations of the deliverance which we now commemorate, and to cause it to be effected by a train of events and instruments, which at first, and through the greater part of their progress were seemingly so unpropitious or inadequate to the accomplishment of this happy and wonderful work. When, six years ago, with a perfidy unparalleled, the usurper invaded the independence of Spain, and led its unsuspecting prince into treacherous captivity; when his armies overrun the country, and his brother was seated, as the shadow of his authority, in the palace of Madrid, mortal eyes considered the subjugation of that devoted land, as not only inevitable in itself, but as threatening materially to contribute towards the ultimate views of its conqueror, in rivetting the chains of bondage on the rest of Europe. And yet it is now evident that this inordinate outrage on Spain produced the germ of that resistance, which has laid the tyrant prostrate in the dust. It is evident, that the noble struggle in the peninsula, directed by the consummate abilities of a spotless Leader, reared up by Pro-

vidence for the occasion, first served to break the spell of Buonaparte's invincibility, and materially aided by its success, the toilsome efforts, which the north of Europe was doomed to undergo against the insatiable ambition of its devastator.

When in the further development of his plan, Napoleon penetrated with his countless hosts into the bosom of Russia, what virtuous heart did not quake with anxiety and fear as to the event of a contest apparently so unequal! And yet to the issue of that contest is the world obviously indebted for the union of those means which divine providence has employed in the late redemption. In the very fullness of presumptuous insolence, on the instant of execution, the haughtiest and most extravagant threat of flaming wrath, the catastrophe of the invader began to be unfolded. From the flaming ruins of captive Moscow, the holy ardour of patriotic enthusiasm, catching redoubled blaze, spread forth with inextinguishable lustre; vindictive justice gleamed over the ranks of the fell incendiary; and his gorgeous armament “melted away like wax.”—The myriads, with which he had advanced, were dispersed and driven back, “like the chaff which the wind driveth away from the face of the earth.”

In addition to the energy of Russian prowess, we beheld the elements of nature employed to complete the signal chastisement of the enemy of man and defier of God. The Almighty “casteth forth his icelike morsels—Who is able to abide his frost?” The tide of war was rolled back to overtake the ruthless spoiler, and to overwhelm his fortunes with irretrievable ruin.

In the succeeding progressive steps, by which the abatement of the tyrant was at last settled, we also perceive manifold evidences of the interposition of an Omnipotent Disposer. It was remarkable and unexampled, that a coalition of so many powers, as that which was formed against Buonaparte, should persevere with good faith and unity of design until that momentous design was fully achieved. In the principal agents of the achievement, the great and venerable Kutusoff, the equally venerable and glorious Blucher, and the distinguished Schwartzenburg, avengers and protectors of humanity, we cannot but discern an extraordinary combination of superior minds, reserved and brought forward as instruments of Heaven, for a crisis, which was to determine the dearest interests and anxious hopes of all mankind. In the conduct of the tyrant himself, we see distinct proofs of an overruling destiny, which hurried him on to the consummation of the fate. As the allies advanced thro' the territory of France, repeated opportunities, almost to the last moment, were afforded him of concluding a peace on terms, which would have left him in the possession of sovereign power, with which, at some future day, he might again return to vex and plague the nations and renew his schemes of aggrandizement and despoliation. But he would not take heed from the counsels of prudence, and he persisted with the obstinacy of madness in the road that led him to perdition. *Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat*—Heaven deprived the miscreant of understanding, in order to ensure his destruction.

And shall we not then rejoice with gratitude in the fulfilment of the high purposes of Heaven, manifested in mercy to a large portion of the human family, so long suffering in slavery and trepidation! Shall we not rejoice in a revolution, thus easily, happily, and miraculously effected; that promises to secure the blessing of free and mitigated privileges of government to the afflicted people of a mighty empire, which, for five and twenty years has been lacerated by discord and exhausted by oppression! Shall we not rejoice in the restoration, both to France and Spain, of an innocent, ill-fated, and illustrious family, the family of the Bourbons, which the fathers of our own revolution, in the recorded annals of Congress, honored and glorified

as the august allies of American Independence! Shall we not rejoice, that ancient Germany, whose integrity of character is preserved in her numerous descendants settled around us, is liberated from her disgrace & despondency? Shall we not rejoice that Prussia is risen from her fall, and the splendor of her name revived by a pupil of the great Frederick! That hapless Portugal has been snatched from extinction! And republican Switzerland relieved from the rapacity and insolence of the minions of her pretended mediator? Shall we avow no pleasure, that Holland, for so many years subjected to the bitterest tribulation—Holland, the early friend of American liberty—whose commerce has perished under the same malevolent influence that has blighted our own—Shall we not rejoice that Holland is no longer tributary to violence and exaction? The banners of Orange and the Bourbon white, once hoisted in honourable league with our good old flag of thirteen stars:—And shall we evince no gratification in the prospect, that the re-appearance of these long lost emblems may prove the general harbinger of returning trade, tranquility and order? Will we not exult in the restoration of so many nations to their rights and privileges—in the renewal amongst them of harmonious intercourse, instead of the prevalence of inveterate and sanguinary rage—and in the assurance of a just balance in Europe, which promises durable peace and diffusive prosperity throughout a hemisphere with which our prosperity and peace are vitally connected.

As men and christians, solicitous of the good of our species, we are specially called upon to exult in the display of compassionate forbearance and benignity, of which the magnanimous and excellent Alexander, the soul of the confederacy, exhibited so bright an example in those memorable proceedings, which terminated the sway of the rufian scourge of man, the impious derider and violator of all ties, human and divine. We are called upon to demonstrate a pious joy, that an overbearing power has ceased to exist, which systematically encouraged crime and made virtue tremble—that an awful and transcendent warning is presented to the pride of guilt never to elate itself in success, and a happy admonition to the faithful, never to despair in adversity.—“Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the council of the ungodly;—and whose dwelleth under the defence of the most high, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

But where is now the vain boaster—where is now to be found the habitation of that demigod of self, who so lately passed by at the head of the most numerous, formidable and glittering array, ever poured forth since the vast irruption of the Persian monarch, by whom Athens was fired! Where is the grand pacificator who, only two years ago, advanced to dictate laws to an affrighted universe, from the capital of the Czars? But yesterday the word of Napoleon “might have stood against the world.—Now lies he low—and none so poor to do him reverence.”—He that “assumed the God,” hath not only fallen from the pinnacle of his high estate, but the degrading and abject manner, (and the despicable circumstances of abdication with life,) of his fall, while it leaves to his dark spirit nothing but the madness of memory, will teach to after-warriors and usurpers a lesson of humility—a sense of “ambition's less than littleness,” such as was never taught before. All evil spirit as thou art, It is enough to grieve the heart, To see thine own unstrung; To think, that God's fair world hath been The foot-stool of a thing so mean.

We rejoice moreover, as christians and philanthropists, in the special manifestation of that Omnipotent Mercy, which educes good out of evil, and regularity out of chaos. We exult in the passing testimonies of the fulfilment of the word, against which the hatred of infidelity has conspired in vain, and against which it is written that the