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ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN THE CHAPEL OF

JEFFERSON COLLEGE,

CANONSBURGH, PA.,

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1839,

BY M. BROWN, D. D., PRESIDENT.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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Jefferson College, July 5, 1839

REV. DR. BROWN,

DEAR SIR,—At a meeting of the Senior Class, held this morning, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to solicit for publication a copy of your very excellent Address, delivered yesterday, before a large and highly interested audience.

Respectfully yours,

F. W. SARGENT, } Committee
JOHN LLOYD, } of
J. C. KUNKEL, } Senior Class.

Jefferson College, July 6, 1839.

GENTLEMEN,—The Address, a copy of which you request, was hastily prepared, as you know, and on a trite subject, on which little originality can be expected. I do not, however, feel at liberty to refuse the request of a much respected class, soon to separate, hoping, that whilst it may be hereafter the occasion of pleasant recollections, the important principles discussed may not be unprofitable.

Respectfully yours,

M. BROWN.

TO MESSRS. F. W. SARGENT, JOHN LLOYD, J. C. KUNKEL,
Committee of Senior Class.

ADDRESS.

IN every age and in every country it has been customary to commemorate important events, and to celebrate illustrious actions by the observance of anniversaries. Usages of this kind, so reasonable in themselves and agreeable to the sentiments and feelings of mankind, have been sanctioned by divine authority. The deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage was, by the divine command, to be commemorated by an annual festival called the Passover—a frugal repast, accompanied with solemn religious rites.

The return of that day on each revolving year, to be observed by the whole nation, would naturally remind them of their former servitude and distresses, and their marvellous deliverances. On that day they would revert to the origin of their nation, and the most important events in their history. They would recount with patriotic glee the names and achievements of the most distinguished of their ancestors. Fathers would tell to their children the affecting incidents in the lives of the patriarchs. They would tell of Joseph, and of Moses, and Caleb, and Joshua, and other heroes and benefactors. They would especially remember the day of their deliverance with hearts of gratitude to *Him* who, by a “strong hand and outstretched arm,”

rescued them from their oppressors, and advanced them to an elevated rank among the nations. Such an observance would at the same time cherish the flame of patriotism and of piety; love to their country and gratitude to their God.

In some such manner ought the anniversary of our National Independence to be celebrated. The return of this day should call forth such grateful recollections and instructive reflections as the occasion is calculated to excite. It is to be regretted that such a day should be to many only the occasion of disorder, profanity, and vulgar indulgences. And surely the patriotism of that man is of little value which displays itself only in gratifying the animal appetites, in eating and drinking to excess—a patriotism which evaporates and passes off with the solids and fluids on which it has operated.

If time permitted, it would be interesting to review the history of our fathers from the first settlement of our country—their toils and dangers, their privations and conflicts; and to recount their patience under sufferings—their labors and perseverance in surmounting unparalleled obstacles—and their heroism in war with numerous and powerful enemies in different stages of their history.

A large proportion of the colonists sought in this country, then a wilderness, an asylum from oppression, where they might enjoy undisturbed their civil and religious liberties. Unlike other nations that have gradually emerged from barbarism to civilization and refinement, this nation was highly civilized from its origin. The pilgrim fathers brought with them to these shores all the elements of an enlightened, refined

and virtuous people. Among the early colonists were to be found some of the choicest men of the age, distinguished for talent, for learning and piety. They brought with them the literature, the sciences and the arts of the old world. They were *picked men*, men of choice spirits, prompted by the noblest motives, the love of liberty and the love of God. Their first act on landing was an act of renewed consecration to the Almighty. They brought with them their religious instructors, their Sabbaths and religious institutions, their libraries and their instructors in science. Their first public edifices were temples dedicated to God and to literature. Their first legislation was directed to the promotion of religion, the education of youth, the preservation of civil liberty and the rights of conscience—for which they had here sought an asylum at the peril of their lives.

The result was such as might be expected from such an origin. Their sufferings were great from famine, disease and war. Their industry and enterprise surmount every obstacle. Their valor triumphs over savage foes, the most formidable on earth. Under the protecting care of Heaven they are preserved. The wilderness soon becomes a fruitful field; “towns and cities rise to cheer the desert.” They increase in numbers, resources and wealth. They attract the attention and excite the envy and contention of European nations.

Attached to the mother country by consanguinity, language and religion, they were among the most loyal subjects of Britain. Under her banner they fought, and endured for nearly half a century the perils and privations of a war with France, and the

native savages, armed and instigated by them against the colonies.

The history of those times is a history of cruelty and blood. Danger encircled every dwelling, and death lurked in every path. Neither age nor sex offered the least protection. "The laborer was murdered in the field—the slumberer was massacred on his pillow—and the worshipper was slain at the altar." In this tedious and bloody war, England is victorious, France is humbled, and her American possessions rescued from her grasp; but it is at the expense of American treasure and blood.

Scarcely had these scenes closed when new troubles arise, and from an unexpected source. Great Britain, under whose banner we had fought and conquered, adopts a policy towards her colonies to which a people jealous of their liberties cannot submit. Principles are assumed which awakened the suspicions and alarmed the fears of the inhabitants of the States. The claims of Britain were alleged by the colonies to be a direct violation of their *chartered* rights, in violation of the rights of British subjects, and in violation of the essential principles of justice and that liberty on account of which they had left their native land, and sought a residence on these shores.

The *immediate* question at issue was, the *right* of parliament to tax the people of the colonies in another hemisphere, not represented in the British legislature. The contest began by litigation on the celebrated *stamp* act and the tax on *tea*. But it was not the value of a petty stamp on paper, nor the paltry value of three pence a pound on tea, that was regarded. It was the *right*, it was the *principle*, viewed in its

consequences by a people intelligent, far-sighted, and jealous of their liberties.

In tracing the origin and causes of the revolution, and the consequent establishment of our free institutions, we must go far back beyond the *immediate* cause and occasion.

As the natural sun does not suddenly rise on the world, but is preceded by a dawn gradually increasing from the first feeble ray which shoots athwart the darkness—so it was with the sun of liberty which has arisen in this Western hemisphere with so much splendor and glory. It may be traced to the revival of letters in Europe—to the invention of printing—and especially to that glorious reformation by Luther and others, which awoke the nations of Europe from the slumber of ages, and shook to their foundations the thrones of despots.

For more than a thousand years Europe had been chained in mental and civil bondage. The unholy alliance of civil and ecclesiastical power held the nations in the most abject ignorance and despotism. It was truly a *dark* age. The sacred fire was not, it is true, at any time entirely extinguished. Cherished as it was by some gallant spirits in the Alpine vallies, it kept up a dim but steady light in the midst of surrounding darkness. It gleamed forth for a season in the days of Huss and Jerome of Prague; and blazed out resplendent at the reformation by Luther. It shot its rays through every kingdom of Europe. It has melted the chains of ecclesiastical despotism wherever it has prevailed. It has modified and restrained civil and political tyranny in all the monarchies of Europe; and to this may be traced the origin of our own free

institutions, and any portion of true republicanism on earth. A precious admission has been extorted from Mr. Hume, an infidel historian, and on this point an impartial witness,—that to the *Puritans* Britain is indebted for all that portion of republican liberty which is blended with her monarchy; and that to them *the world* is indebted for any true liberty to be found in it.

The descendants of these Puritans, more than two hundred years ago, with minds deeply imbued with piety and with the principles of liberty, well instructed in the *rights of man*, came to this land; and to them chiefly, under God, we may trace the origin of our independence as a nation, and those republican institutions which are the admiration of the world.

But to return to the *immediate* cause and occasion of the revolution. As observed already, it was the question of *right* to tax Americans without representation and without their consent. The controversy was carried on for ten years before the final issue. It was carried on by petition, remonstrance, and universal discussion. Neither party anticipated a dissolution of the tie of allegiance. The colonists were loyal to a proverb. They were devotedly attached to Britain and her monarch. The Protestant succession was their idol. Their petitions and remonstrances were disregarded. The monarch unhappily yielded to infatuated counsellors, contrary to the protestations of the best men in Britain. The contest was not to be decided but by an appeal to arms. As *protection* was denied, the States were constrained to renounce their allegiance, and to assume their station among the independent nations of the earth.

The discussion of ten years had opened to the con-

temptation of men the first foundations of civil liberty and government. "The fountains of the great deep were broken up; all the legitimate sources of power, and all the primitive elements of freedom, were scrutinized, analyzed, debated and elucidated:" and with a deliberation and solemnity unexampled in the history of the world, the people of these United States, by their representatives in Congress, on the 4th of July, 1776,—“appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of their intentions”—and “with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence,”—adopted and subscribed the ever memorable Declaration of Independence.

After the Declaration of Independence, the issue of the contest was necessarily changed. Heretofore the colonies had maintained the contest on the principle of resisting the invasion of *chartered* rights; but now the Declaration of Independence, claiming the right of *sovereignty*, based itself on the first foundations of the law of nature, and the incontestible doctrine of human rights. “Liberty—not only their own liberty, but the fundamental principles of liberty to the whole race of civilized man, was involved in the contest.”

We cannot here enter upon details in the history of the seven years’ war, from the Declaration of Independence until its establishment in the peace of 1783.

We will just advert to some particulars, especially as indicating the interpositions of Providence in our behalf. While we cheerfully render to the heroes and statesmen of the revolution their appropriate honors, we should ever remember how much more is due to that Great Being to whose superintending guidance and protection *they* had committed themselves and

the nation. How discouraging was the aspect of affairs at the commencement of the unequal contest! Think of the exposed situation of our country, with an extensive boundary, vulnerable at so many points;—without resources, without money, without ammunition and arms—to contend with an enemy numerous and powerful in resources, skilled in military discipline, and led on by experienced commanders. Think also of the difficulty of uniting in concert so many different States, widely scattered over an extensive territory, with diversities of interests, prejudices and habits. Yet we find one spirit seems to pervade the whole: harmony prevails in all the public councils: colonial distinctions seem to be forgotten in the common cause: sectional feelings, jealousies and interests, are all sacrificed on the common altar of liberty.

The first shout of resistance from Lexington and Bunker Hill was re-echoed from every part of the land. The sufferings of the North, where the war began, awakened universal sympathy in the South. The shutting of Boston port, designed by the enemy not only to chastise the Bostonians, but by diverting commerce to awaken rival interests in other cities and states, entirely failed in the object. Their sufferings were responded to by expressions of sympathy—by voluntary contributions for their relief—by solemn acts of protestation in public councils;—and to the immortal honor of Virginia, who took the lead in the South as Massachusetts did in the North, her Legislature, on that occasion, issued a proclamation for a solemn fast and day of humiliation and prayer.

It is also worthy of notice, that we were preserved from anarchy and confusion when in a state of transi-

tion from the dissolution of the old governments until the new ones were organized in their stead. Provincial conventions were held—city and county committees were every where chosen—and such was the patriotic zeal of the people, that the decisions and recommendations of these committees had the force of law, and were as cheerfully obeyed as the authority of regular government.

Another particular deserving our attention is, the evident interposition of Providence in bringing deliverance at particular crises in our affairs, when prospects were most gloomy, and hope ready to expire.

This was remarkably the case in the victory at Trenton and Princeton, near the close of 1776.—Gloomy indeed were the prospects of the American cause. The British commander, at the head of a numerous and well disciplined army, flushed with victory, was marching over the country without opposition.—The American army, greatly reduced in numbers, destitute of necessary accommodations, almost naked, and barefooted, were obliged to retreat before a superior force in the dead of winter, when their march was literally tracked with blood from their shoeless feet. At such a time, any other soldiers but Americans—any other general but Washington—would have despaired of the Republic. At this crisis the God of battles, in whom they trusted, interposed in their behalf. Congress recommended to each of the States “a day of solemn fasting and humiliation before God.” Immediately after, on the 25th of December, the capture of the Hessians at Trenton, and the subsequent victory at Princeton, changed the aspect of affairs,—revived the drooping spirits of the army and the American people.

Other instances might be noticed—such as the victory over Burgoyne, after the losses at Brandywine and Germantown, when the British took possession of Philadelphia. The alliance with France, also, took place at a time when most needed—when, from the depreciation of Congress money, pecuniary supplies had almost entirely failed.

We may further notice the dangers, privations, self-denial and sufferings, which were cheerfully endured by every class of the community. It is not in the “tented field,” when the most timid may be roused by the trumpet of war, and the din of battle, to rush on danger and death, that the greatest courage is displayed. It is when men coolly, deliberately, and perseveringly expose themselves to danger, and patiently endure privations and distresses.

When the Patriots of '76 pledged their “lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor,” it was not a sudden impulse; it was a most deliberate act. When they pledged their *all*, they knew the certain forfeiture in case of defeat, and deliberately “counted the cost.”—Hancock, whose manly signature heads the list of these heroes, knew well that by this act he jeopardized his life and his princely fortune; and thousands throughout the country followed his example. Rich and poor alike shared the common danger. The officers and soldiers of the regular army often experienced the greatest privations without a murmur. The husbandman, at the call of his country, leaves his plough, and exchanges the peaceful employments of his farm for the hazards and sufferings of the camp. The wealthy forego the luxuries of British exportation, to resist unjust taxation, and to encourage domestic manufactures.

And it would be unjust to the *daughters of America* to deny to them a full share of the honors of patriotic zeal. Cheerfully did they forego the luxuries of the table, and the ornaments of dress, at the call of patriotism. The *tea* plant, the occasion and memento of the contest, at that time a general and favorite beverage, was abandoned, and herbs from the garden or the mountain-side substituted in its stead. Silks and brocades were laid aside; and they were not ashamed to appear in the proudest circles in the fabrics of their own hands. Their husbands, too, proudly appeared in the halls of legislation clad in *homespun*. The soldiers, also, were often furnished with the needed garments by their hands.

The beautiful description of the virtuous woman, as given by the inspired king, was never more appropriate: "She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. Many daughters have done virtuously, but *thou* excellest them all."

Viewing the heroes and statesmen of the revolution at this distance, and associated as their names are with events and enterprises so interesting and sublime, we may be partial in our estimates of their character. We cannot, however, but believe that they were *extraordinary* men, raised up by Providence for an extraordinary occasion.

Here it would be pleasant, if time permitted, to recount the names and achievements of Warren and Montgomery, the first martyrs in the sacred cause. Of Allen, with his Green Mountain boys; and Clinton, and

Gates, and Green, (second only to Washington)—and Putnam—“*magnæ animæ prodigus*,”—and Sullivan, and the Lees and Laurens, Mercer and Hayne, Marion and Moultrie, Morgan and Wayne—the “thunderbolts of war”—with many others of glorious memory.

Of *statesmen and counsellors* what a splendid catalogue! There are Adams and Hancock, nobly distinguished by proscription as excepted from the general amnesty. There they are!—with the noble band who signed the Declaration of Independence. But we cannot specify. Would that I could place before you Trumbull’s immortal painting. A picture of so much *moral* grandeur should be procured by Congress and hung up in every literary hall throughout the land.

Though the subject has been so often hackneyed, we must not omit that special Providence which raised up a man so eminently qualified to be the Commander-in-chief;—a man not so much distinguished by pre-eminence in any one great qualification, as by a happy assemblage of all. To be a brave and skilful commander was common to him with many others. But the times required a man of strong, penetrating mind; a man of prudence, fortitude and perseverance; a man capable of engaging the affections and confidence of all classes; a Fabius Maximus, patient in adversity, humble in prosperity,—capable of bearing with the murmurings of the ignorant or the designing,—and in the darkest times never despairing of the Republic. Such were the qualifications of the man who should lead the armies of America; and such she found in WASHINGTON! In answer to a unanimous call, he accepted the important trust; and the event showed it was approved of Heaven.

I may also notice that the novelty and sublimity of the enterprise awakened attention and sympathy in the nations of Europe. A number of distinguished foreigners, from France, Germany and Poland, took part in the contest, and furnished us with officers of rank and experience. Among these may be mentioned Pulaski, Kosciusko, De Kalb, Steuben, and above all, Gilbert Motier de Lafayette.

The name and history of this remarkable man is closely connected with the history of the Revolution—as it is with the history of Europe for more than half a century. Born of a family of the highest rank of nobility—connected by marriage with another family of equal or superior dignity—with a princely fortune—with every thing which honor, wealth, and royal favor could promise or confer—he determines to forego all, and to devote his life and fortune in the cause of freedom in a foreign land. Ere he had arrived at the years of manhood, he embarks in a ship purchased and furnished with military stores at his own expense; and on his arrival tenders to Congress his services as a volunteer soldier. The important services which he rendered as a soldier and commander are well known. Still more important was his influence in other respects. The chivalry of his conduct awakened the attention of Europe. His great influence and popularity no doubt hastened the alliance with France, at that time so important, and brought the contest to a speedy conclusion in the establishment of our National Independence.

The immediate consequence of Independence was the establishment of our National Institutions—the Federal Constitution, and the Constitutions of the several States. These have no parallel in the history of



the world. They were formed after the most mature deliberation and ample discussion,—first in convention,—then submitted directly to the people,—then again discussed and adopted by them in their primary assemblies.

These Constitutions embody all the great principles of free government—for which patriots had been contending for centuries. These secure the equal rights of man to every citizen. Here are no hereditary distinctions or exclusive privileges. Here is every stimulus to industry, by securing to every man the fruits of his labor. Here is every inducement to cultivate the faculties of the mind, from the hope of elevation.—Here the cultivator is the proprietor of the soil. Here every man may walk on his own ground, till his own field, eat the fruit of his own labor, and rest beneath the shade of his own tree.

Religious liberty, too, is here secured. In defence of this, many of our ancestors suffered martyrdom. In pursuit of this, most of the early colonists left their native land, that here they might enjoy it undisturbed. The rights of conscience are guaranteed in every Constitution. Here no civil code binds the conscience. No flames or inquisition deter from the sanctuary of God. No assuming pontiff dictates to the faith of any who are unwilling to *surrender their consciences to his keeping*. And under the blessing of Heaven on our Institutions, the American nation has advanced in numbers, prosperity, enterprise, and wealth, unparalleled in the history of nations.

Nor have these effects been confined to our own country. The light has reflected across the Atlantic. All Europe has felt its influence. The spectacle of our

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