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315 - August 1821 - P. M. Mearns
AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED IN SCHENECTADY, N. Y.

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JULY 4th, 1821.

By HOOPER CUMMING, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE
CITY OF ALBANY.



SCHENECTADY:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY ISAAC RIGGS.

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1821.

Schenectady, 10th July, 1821.

REV. HOOPER CUMMING,

Dear Sir,

We present you with a Resolution, passed by the committee of arrangements, appointed by the corporation and military officers of this city, and *beg leave to add our individual wishes, that you will comply with their request.*

“*Resolved, unanimously, That the thanks of this committee be presented to the Rev. Hooper Cumming, for his eloquent, impressive and interesting Oration, delivered in this city on the forty-fifth Anniversary of our Independence, and that he be solicited to furnish a copy for publication, and that J. Broderick and J. B. Duane, be a committee to carry this resolution into effect.*”

Extract from the minutes of the proceedings of the committee of arrangements.—6th July, 1821.

J. BRODERICK,

J. B. DUANE,

On behalf of the Committee of Arrangements.

Albany, July 25th, 1821.

Maj. J. BRODERICK and

Lieut. J. B. DUANE.

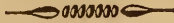
Gentlemen,

I did not receive your polite note until last evening, owing to my absence from the city. I send you, in compliance with the request of the committee of arrangements, a copy of the Oration pronounced by me on the 4th inst.

Most respectfully yours,

HOOPER CUMMING.

ORATION.



EVERY civilized nation, has some day consecrated to patriotism and the deeds of heroes. Marathon and Thermopylæ, Bannockburn and Boyne, Agincourt and Poitiers, the overthrow of the invincible Armada; the heights of Bunker, the plains of Trenton, Princeton, Saratoga, Monmouth, Yorktown; the Nile and Trafalgar, Lodi and Marengo, Badajos and Salamanca, Vittoria and St. Sebastians, Vimiera and Almeida, Leipsick and Waterloo, are all held in high and glorious remembrance. But that day which above every other, except the hallowed day of God, calls forth the gratitude, and inspires the zeal, and nerves the arm, and fortifies the resolution of the patriot, is the anniversary which we have now met to commemorate.

The 4th of July, 1776, is the proudest period in the annals of human liberty. It was then, that sages who surpassed the boasted models of antiquity—that soldiers fired with the spirit of Leonidas—that a whole nation spurned the fetters of monarchy, and vowed

by the God of Justice, that they would be free or perish. The venerable matron poured her blessings on her first-born, as he girded himself for battle: fathers stimulated their sons by their own example: beauty's tear glistened as the dew-drop, and urged decision and a quick return: Even the sanctuary sent forth its streams, and ministers of the Lord invoked the spirit of the Highest, and grasped the sword of Gideon.

An event so solemn and portentous, deserves to be traced to its first causes, and weighed in its results.

Fellow-Citizens! The settlement of our country, is a subject on which we may dwell with the most delightful sensations. Whether we contemplate the magnitude of the enterprize, the decisive intellectual energy that prompted it, or the humble resignation to the allotments of divine providence, with which it was effected, we shall be alike lost in admiration, or overwhelmed by gratitude. We are not here compelled to search the impenetrable caverns of antiquity; nor do we roam, without a guide, through the wilds and mazes of fable and conjecture. The first adventurers are not like the father of the Roman people, handed to us as the sucklings of a wolf; nor were they miserable fugitives, escaping from the remains of some ruined Troy; nor did they like the barbarous

Goths and exterminating Vandals, leave their abodes in quest of plunder, and rapine, and devastation.—Smarting under the lash of persecution in the old world, they chose rather, like the ancient patriarch, peaceably to remove from their brethren, than to continue subject to endless strife and collision—and fixing on a spot which had in a measure been abandoned by its former inhabitants; by fair and honorable purchases and treaties, they obtained an amicable possession: and though their names have not reached us as the destroyers of mankind—though the clarion of conquest has not wafted the glory of their actions over seas of human blood; yet with honest exultation, we can dwell on their christian graces, their unparalleled patience under suffering, their heroic fortitude, their generous magnanimity.

Liberty, a celestial goddess, whose footsteps may be discovered on the misty hills, and whose most delightful haunts may be traced to the mountain top, though she does not unfrequently refuse her presence to the plain and the valley—who had for ages received the homage of philosophers, and poets, and statesmen in Greece—to whose divinity splendid altars were consecrated, and who had been driven by the ruthless hand of tyranny from her loiterings on the shores of the Adriatic, was about to take her departure for ever from the abodes of civilized man, when she found

an asylum in America. Here, she erected her temple: here, multitudes crowded its vestibule: under her stepplings, these deserts burst into bloom and verdure, and the whole face of creation assumed a fresher, a more delightful loveliness.

This country was discovered by the light of the reformation. Wickliff, and Huss, and Jerome had been persecuted to heaven—but their doctrines remained on earth: and when Luther, and Calvin, and Knox arose, usurpation and bigotry were struck dumb. No longer could the monstrous tenets of the Pope's infallibility, and the divine right of kings, rule o'er the nations with unlimited sway. Mankind began to think: they reflected on their origin and their destination. Stung by remorse for their past supineness, and ashamed of vassallage, they resolved to assert their native dignity, and if others were ennobled by titles, that they would be nature's noblemen. Already had John's trembling and reluctant hand presented the magna charta. Already had the churches of Geneva taught, that "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Already had the towers and domes of Protestant Europe, reflected the effulgence of truth. But ecclesiastical tyranny, notwithstanding she had received a mortal blow, had not expired. She erected once more her hydra-head, and began to revel, in imagination, over the downfall and desolation of man's

best hopes. False idea! The very controversy excited research, and produced the developement of still juster principles of government, both in the church and state. And the colonists of Raleigh, the puritans of Plymouth Rock, the Swedes of Jersey, the Dutch of Manhattan Island, and the adventurers of Oglethorpe, brought with them the germ of attachment to freedom, which before the close of the eighteenth century, produced precious fruit, that was for the healing, in due time, of all the nations.

It was not to be rationally expected, that men whose minds were thus organized and illumined, whose principles were thus disciplined and chastened, and who in the school of suffering had been taught the most wholesome lessons of experience, would ever submit to the goadings of oppression. Accordingly, for years before the declaration of independence, again and again was the energetic voice of American remonstrance heard. It declared in tones of thunder, that freemen should not be taxed but by their own Assemblies, and with their own consent.— It denounced subjection to a British parliament in which they were unrepresented. The Britons, haughty as they were ignorant, spurned at the suggestion of the fatal consequences which would grow out of their encroachments on the Rights of Man. “*Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat.*” Never was this maxim

more fully verified. That liberty might exist unshackled by conditions, and unterrified by the possible approach of danger, the God of nations delivered to the counsel of Ahithophel, North and his coadjutors. He permitted the cup of conciliation to be drained to its dregs. Then the noble hearts of thirteen colonies, resolved themselves into free and independent states. For the defence of freedom, which was their birth-right—for the protection of the property acquired by their honest industry—for the preservation of pure morals, uncontaminated by the approach of English luxury—against violence actually offered—against the myrmidons of oppression, and in defiance of the execrations of eleven millions, they raised to Heaven the imploring eye, and gave the watch-word, onward, onward.

That a people, without a well-tryed and established system of government—without armies and without a navy—without experience in war—with an extended and unprotected frontier, should with such promptitude, unanimity and energy, rise to meet, nay, to court approaching danger: should unhesitatingly laugh at the vengeance of a monarch whose friendship and alliance were sought with eagerness by the most powerful nations—whose armies, commanded by the most experienced generals, were a terror to the world—whose navies rode triumphant

on every sea, and whose resources were incalculably great, is almost incredible. This day may return, and return, and return, but every year will bring with it increasing surprize and admiration. Howe, Cornwallis, Gage, Burgoyne, Rodney, came to strangle the infant rebel—but it was an infant Hercules. Every breath gave a scope the most unbounded, to the developement of the human faculties. Then was presented to the world, a catalogue of patriots, who displayed far more than Roman and Grecian virtue—of legislators infinitely superior to Numa and Lycurgus—and of statesmen, the most erudite, comprehensive and profound, that had ever been beheld. A more august assembly never convened under the canopy of yonder skies, than the first American Congress, at Philadelphia. The consequences of the severance by them proclaimed, in relation to the character, condition and happiness of the human race, the intervention of ages will be required to disclose.

You are familiar with the history of the alternate depressions and elevations which distinguished the struggle of the revolution in America. I perceive in my audience, some hoary heads who partook largely both of the exultation and sufferings of that glorious period. Peace to your spirits, philanthropic and virtuous men! It is an honour to address you. The privations which you suffered, shall bind closely to our

hearts, our country and its cause. The success which crowned your disinterested and almost superhuman efforts, will encourage us in the darkest days. The gloomiest hour will not dishearten us; for we will remember your devotion, and hear your shouts. On the altars which you built, we will sacrifice every selfish purpose. And, by the spirits of our sainted sires, we will swear to transmit to our children, untainted and without infraction, the blood-bought charter of our liberties.

When our nation, like its leader, had only to take counsel from its courage, the most acute sufferings were anticipated. For more than seven years, the savage foe-man and the fiend-like Hessian, exhausted their murderous propensities. The old man trembling beneath a weight of years; the infant smiling on the glittering bayonet, pointed at its bosom; and the tender female swooning amidst her fears, were alike disregarded. Then beneath a burning sun, or through almost impenetrable snows, the father was torn from his shrieking family; and traitors and hirelings applied the torch which drove from the peaceful cottage its inmates, whose flight was facilitated by the flames and by the crash.

But he who pities the calamities of the innocent, and strikes off the fetters of the prisoner, inspired with

a lofty and unyielding patriotism, the band who rallied around Washington. Under his auspices, a civil war was conducted with blended mildness and energy, and a revolution with perfect order, and with splendid and unparalleled success.

Great-Britain had been indeed elate with her former victories. All Europe stood in awe of her. Her arms made the thrones of the most powerful unsteady, and disturbed the tranquility of their states, with an agitation more extensive than an earthquake. "As the giant Enceladus is fabled to lie under Etna, and to shake the mountains when he turns his limbs, her hostility was felt to the extremities of the earth."

It is not then surprizing, that the signal defeats she experienced in America, were regarded by the old world, as so many miracles; and that our final success exalted to the highest point their admiration. It does so still. For the consequences which grow out of the establishment of our independence, are the most important and extensive which ever resulted from an appeal to arms.

The first that I shall notice, is the sound judgment which the revolution in America has enabled mankind to form, respecting the motives which should prompt the leaders of armies, while in actual service,

and magistrates in a time of peace. It presented in the father of our country, lineaments of character, which, all who wish the public confidence, aspire to imitate. It now holds him forth, of whom a soldier and philosopher, who fought by his side, has truly said,* “ Brave without temerity, laborious without ambition, generous without prodigality, noble without pride, virtuous without severity, he seems always to have confined himself within those limits where the virtues, by clothing themselves in more lively but more changeable colours, may be mistaken for faults. Let it be repeated, Conde was intrepid, Turenne prudent, Eugene adroit, Catinet disinterested. It is not thus that Washington will be characterized. It will be said of him, at the end of a long civil war, that he had nothing with which he could reproach himself. If any thing can be more marvellous than such a character, it is the unanimity of the public suffrage in his favour. Soldier, magistrate, people, all love and admire him : all speak of him in terms of tenderness and the highest veneration.” His example is before us. It attracts and fixes the gaze of his countrymen, like a newly discovered star, whose benign light will travel on to the worlds’ and times’ farthest bounds. The deeds of his heroism and virtue, are told round many a fire-side. Over his grave the widow weeps, the orphan sheds a tear; while in the

* The Marquis of Chastelleux.

hearts of all his countrymen, his memory is embalmed. His name cheers, and guides, and in every danger saves. Already is it hung up by history, as conspicuously as if it sparkled in one of the constellations of the sky. "Some future Plutarch will search in vain for a parallel to his character. Epaminondas is, perhaps, the brightest name of all antiquity.—Washington resembled him in the purity and ardour of his patriotism; and like him, he first exalted the glory of his country. There the parallel ends—for Thebes fell with Epaminondas. But such comparisons cannot be pursued far, without departing from the similitude." For, as the prince of American orators* has declared, "We shall find it as difficult to compare great men as great rivers. Some we admire for the length and rapidity of their course, and the grandeur of their cataracts; others, for the majestic silence and fulness of their streams. We cannot bring them together to measure the difference of their waters. The unambitious life of Washington, declining fame, yet courted by it, seemed like the Ohio, to choose its long way through solitudes, diffusing fertility; or like his own Potomac, widening and deepening his channel, as he approaches the sea, and displaying most the usefulness and serenity of his greatness, toward the end of his course."

* Hon. Fisher Ames.

The principles of his character, and the devotedness of his patriotism, are held in such high esteem, that an essential departure from them will soon consign to infamy and a private station, any aspirant for office. Demagogues may revile the useful magistrate—appeals may be made to the profligate—and arts practised for a while on the unwary. But the people of this country cannot always be deluded.

“ Truth shall restore the light by nature given,
 And like Prometheus, bring the fire from Heaven!
 Prone to the dust, oppression shall be hurled,
 Her name, her nature, withered from the world.”

If it be questioned, whether the hallowing influence of the American revolution, has alighted on the sons of those patriots who achieved it, ponder the unanimity with which our constitution was adopted—the trivial amendments which have been made to it—the almost universal enthusiasm with which it is now hailed: reflect on Chippewa and Erie, on Bridgewater and Niagara, on New-Orleans and Baltimore: and on the shouts which rent the air when the victories of Hull and Jones, of Decatur and Perry, of Bainbridge and Burrows and M'Donough, were spread throughout the land. Why is it, that Jackson is almost idolized? Because he is devoted to his country. In many respects, he resembles Washington. The father lives in the son. And the same patriotism which crown-

ed the former chief, awards the laurel to the living hero. Opposition indeed he has received. "To be great, is to be envied." Traitors and squeamish politicians would have prescribed to him the same mode of warfare—the same tedious, protracted endurance—the same system of truces for savages and christians. But his principles were properly humane.—He struck the blow with such promptitude, as to expel his enemy, and prevent in the issue, the effusion of rivers of blood. His conduct toward the Creeks and Seminoles, I have always regarded as perfectly justifiable, under the peculiar circumstances by which he was surrounded. But at New-Orleans, he became pre-eminently entitled to the character of *Deliverer*.

“ He said, and on the rampart heights arrayed,
 His trusty warriors, young but undismayed :
 Firm-paced and slow, a horrid front they form,
 Still as the breeze, but dreadful as the storm.
 Low, murmuring sounds along their banners fly,
 Revenge or death—the watch-word and reply :
 Then pealed the notes omnipotent to charm,
 And the loud tocsin toll'd their last alarm.
 On Mississippi's waves, the ruins glow,
 His blood-dyed waters murmuring far below.
 Hark! as the invader's hopes despairing fall,
 A thousand shrieks for hopeless mercy call !
 Earth shook—red meteors flashed along the sky,
 And conscious nature shuddered at the cry !”

No nation is more brave and patriotic than our own. From the American revolution we receive our principles. It taught effectually, that a people shall be free, who resolve on liberty.

But the effects are still more benign and extensive. Throughout the civilized world, the representative system is regarded with such reverence, that nothing but the hireling legions of despots, prevents its universal reception. The blasphemously entitled *Holy Alliance*, that league contrived by Satan, and upheld by his emissaries, the tyrant Alexander, the bloated Lewis, the selfish Francis, the debauched George, shall not always thrive. The principles of the Neapolitans and Sardinians only sleep to be refreshed: and the time shall come, when the successful struggle of America, will emancipate the universe. Commerce, science, the arts, religion owe to her eternal gratitude. Ye ministers of the altar! as ye unmolestedly pursue your high and holy calling, remember your obligations to the champions of your liberties, and exclaim, "If we forget you, fathers of our country, who bled for the cities of our God, may our right hand forget her cunning. If we do not remember you, let our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth." Seminaries of learning rise in the wilderness: and Ye, precious youth, the solace of your parents, the pride of genius, the hopes of your country, are indebted to

the disinterested and devoted efforts of such men as Warren, Montgomery, Knox, Hamilton, Schuyler, Lincoln, Gates, Putnam, Maxwell, Ogden, Forman, Sterling, Dayton, Clinton, Morgan, St. Clair, Sullivan, La Fayette, Pickering, DeKalb, Steuben, Pinckney, Willett, for the lights of science which now pour on your literary researches, and for all that serenity and pleasure which you enjoy in this seat of the muses. Letters are more durable than marble. Long since, the monuments of Trajan and Agricola, have perished; but the glory of the one and the virtues of the other, shall exist for ever embalmed by the genius of Pliny and of Tacitus. Egypt, by her panegyrics, first taught the world the influence of posthumous glory, to create wise Magistrates, illustrious heroes, and virtuous citizens. Greece, by the aid of her laurel and her ivy, of her statuaries and her painters, and above all, of her historians and her orators, rendered her citizens, the admiration and the envy of the universe.

My Fellow-Citizens! imitate then the example of the Deliverers of your country. Among the very first lessons which you practice, regard the whole Union as your parent, and frown into annihilation, the accursed spirit of party. It is a foe that sooner or later destroys every valuable principle of civil liberty, and saps the foundation of every free government. To

prove this, we need only unfold the page of history, and instance the fate of the three most celebrated republics of antiquity. If we examine into the causes which either immediately or remotely led to their destruction, we shall trace them, as all arising from the influence of party feuds. *Athens*, the cradle, if not the birth-place of the arts and sciences, fell a victim, not so much to the ambition as to the fears of individuals. Her heroes found no safety, but by becoming the masters instead of the servants of the people, because of the introduction of the fell spirit of party.—The populace were taught that their best benefactors had become the enemies of their liberty. Hence sprung jealousies, heart-burnings, and all those wild, ungovernable passions which form the many-headed monster of civil dissension. Wild uproar stalked in the face of day: both sides resorted to arms: and the victor became the tyrant of the very instruments of his elevation.

Carthage, which succeeded Tyre in the commerce of the globe, rose rapidly in wealth and power, and disputed with Rome, the empire of the world. Led by the immortal Hannibal, her armies lorded over the fields of Italy, and threatened her proud capital with swift destruction. Already the Roman Eagle clapped his wings for flight—already, her proud towers nodded to their fall—when in the centre of Carthage,

arose jealousies and animosities which saved Rome. The mighty Carthaginian chief was stopped short in his career for want of appropriate supplies: he retreated: was overpowered: and in a few years Carthage was no more.

The liberties of *Rome*, the pre-destined mistress of the world, were often martyred at the shrine of party rage. It was this that effected the banishment of Camillus. Her guardian hero now no longer there, Rome sunk beneath the fury of the Gauls, and became a prey to the devouring flames. It was this which generated the struggle of Sylla and Marius—a struggle that terminated in the domination of one of the bloodiest tyrants that ever disgraced the name of man: and at last, the dissensions of Pompey and Cæsar led to the firm establishment of an absolute monarchy. On the plains of Pharsalia, lies buried the genius of ancient Rome. On that memorable day, the sun of her liberty went down, never to rise again.

With such awful examples before him, of the fatal effects of disunion, every honest American must deprecate an undue party-spirit. Those who expect to be gainers by working on the malignant passions of mankind, and who hope to rise on the wreck of civil liberty, those only have dared to infuse into the hearts of my countrymen the deadly poison. The

very existence of free government depends on an union of principle in the mass of the people. This, this, is the master-column which supports the fabric. That once gone, the edifice lies prostrate in the dust, or trembles the sport of every breath of popular opinion. Unite then, my countrymen, and be for ever happy. It is only internal division that can wrest from you the blessings you enjoy. The sword of a foreign enemy we dread not. Secure in the bonds of union, invincible is our strength—our peace and freedom are immortal. The world may confederate its powers, and proudly threaten our destruction :— We laugh them to scorn. Strong in the bulwark of millions of united freemen, the guardian genius of our native land, high towering on a rock of adamant, shall scatter the accumulated host, and vindicate the independence of his country.

On a day like this, let us vow to be brethren—to banish all selfish purposes—to forget all former animosities, and live alone for our common country.

“ America ! my dear, my native soil,
 For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent !
 Long may thy hardy sons of rustick toil
 Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content !
 And oh ! may heaven their simple lives prevent
 From luxury’s contagion, weak and vile !
 Then howe’er crowns and coronets are rent,

A virtuous populace may rise a band,
And be a wall of fire around their much-loved land.

Oh thou who poured the patriotic tide
That stream'd through Washington's undaunted heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannick pride,
Or nobly die the second glorious part:
(The patriot's God peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian and reward !)
O never, never, our blest realm desert,
But still the *patriot* and the *patriot bard*
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard !"

Thus with little alteration, adapted to our local circumstances, Burns prayed for Scotland. Be his sentiments engraven on our hearts ! And oh, may his patriotic fervour dilate our bosom !

Soldiers ! The vale of the Mohawk witnessed the glorious deeds of your fathers ! They said, " we have met the enemy, and they are ours." Victory perched on their standard, for it was the banner of unyielding courage. The savage yell was hushed to silence, and the tomahawk no longer affrighted the frontier settlements. Imitate their heroism : and whenever your country calls, look at the declaration of independence, and in the language of the immortal Wallace, " Remember that God armeth the patriot !"

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