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Book : N 6

1824

OBATION

COMMEMORATIVE OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE;

DELIVERED JULY 5, 1824,

IN THE BOWERY CHURCH,

BEFORE THE

Firemen

OF THE

CITY OF NEW-YORK.

BY HOOPER CUMMING, D. D. PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN VANDEWATER-ST.



FURLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE DELEGATES COMPOSING THE FIREMEN'S COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS.



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1824.

E286 .N6 1824 At a meeting of the Delegates composing the Firemen's Committee of Arrangements, for celebrating the 48th Anniversary of American Independence—it was unanimously "Resolved, That the thanks of the Fire Department be "presented to the Rev. Dr. Hooper Cumming, for the very "able and eloquent Oration delivered by him, before the "Firemen of the city of New-York, in the Bowery Church, on the 5th inst. and that a copy of the same be respectfully "requested for publication."

Extract from the Minutes.

NIEL GRAY, Secretary.



LISPENARD-STREET, July 8, 1824.

NIEL GRAY, Esq. Secretary of the Delegates composing the Firemen's Committee of Arrangements, for celebrating the 48th Anniversary of American Independence:

Dear Sir,

I FEEL under obligations to the "FIRE DEPARTMENT," for the complimentary style of their Communication through you. Enclosed you have the Oration. Although prepared in great haste, and amidst a variety of pressing avocations, it is committed to the same candour with which it was received, by the most important and respectable Association in our City.

With the highest consideration,

Your Obedient Servant,

HOOPER CUMMING.

ORATION.



Auspicious Morn! which witnessed the noblest declaration that ever issued from the lips of patriotism. Auspicious morn! which gilded the manly brows, and dilated the benevolent bosoms, and strung the sturdy nerves of Jefferson, and Adams, and Franklin, and Sherman, and Livingston. Auspicious morn! which heard three millions of freemen exclaim, "The sword of the Lord and of Washington." Oh! it is good to be here. I congratulate you. I rejoice with you. I can without misgivings, call you brethren.

The day that commemorates the birth of a nation, is altogether interesting. The philanthropist regards it with infinitely grateful emotions: the patriot's bosom expands with joy: the christian's heart ascends to heaven, amid the incense of ten thousand praises.

In tracing the causes which originated the formation of a people into a systematick government, and exalted them to the dignity of a great republick, contemplations are awakened of paramount importance. Here, we behold the developement of principles which will influence the welfare of unborn millions, which will have a lasting and decisive operation upon all the diversified relations of man, and for ages will improve or debase his moral character.

On the present joyous occasion, it were needless formally to recapitulate the great events which established our independence, and gave us an exalted station amongst the governments of the earth. You have from your infancy delighted to dwell upon their history. You have often listened to the war-worn veteran, who in tears of grateful memory, recounted the alternate triumphs and defeats of those memorable times which tested, with severe scrutiny, the sincerity of patriotism. You heard him with exultation. Every incident was cherished by you: for it was the story of your birth-"Here," would he say, "our little army of heroes advanced! The proud legions of oppression before us! All that sensibility made dear, to urge usthe altars of our devotion—the fire-side of our children -the sepulchres of our fathers, had been invaded and insulted by unprincipled bands of foreign soldiery. In front of these sacred pledges, we planted our standard. Our motto was short and simple: but it was full of energy. It was the motto of our hearts: and LIBERTY OF DEATH, waved in sight of our foemen.—

They felt its meaning. They learned with fearful conviction the appalling lesson, that the shrine of Liberty was defended by a courage, that was nurtured by principle, and sustained by conscience. We taught them, that the thunders of their cannon, and "all the dread pomp and circumstance of war," sent no terrours to the heart of an honest soldier. He fought not for the blood-stained laurel. The mercenary rewards of the hireling imparted no vigour to his brayery. It was home, and wife, and children, and country, that nerved his arm. It was liberty of thought and action-the noble privilege of governing ourselves, for which we contended. The struggle was long and arduous: but it was successful. Yes! honoured be the memory of that band of worthies! This day with all its blessings: the enjoyments arising from a well-organized government: the inestimable rights of conscience: the certain results of industry and enterprize-secured by the administration of our own laws, challenge our warmest gratitude, and will forever embalm, with the richest praises, the names of those who bled for their country."

You have heard all this! and your pulse beat in unison with every throb and fibre of his heart. But, when he pointed you to the Hero of his story: when, with the native eloquence of a soul that disdained the arts and ornaments of fancy, he presented to you the

name of Washington, and all his virtues, how did his relation brighten in interest, and your attention fasten with eager enthusiasm on all the proud recollections which that name awakened.

In traversing the woods and wilds of America, our great Captain studied the severe and wholesome lessons which dangers and privations furnish. Here, he learned the rudiments of his future greatness. Hardships, adversities, vicissitudes, the perils of savage warfare had chastened and poised his mighty mind. Its powers had been tasked. He had tried, and he knew their strength. When our liberties were endangered when the ambitious ministry of Britain threatened to extinguish the last spark of freedom, and forever colonize our privileges-when our Fathers rose, and in the strength of the God of battles, fixed their purpose with unalterable firmness-when they determined that the chain should be broken, and the oppressor overthrown----Where, where was then the master spirit that could "ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm "-the master spirit that could lead on, and consummate this glorious resolve-the master spirit that could animate the friends and intimidate and annihilate the foes of freedom?

Washington appeared! He had been tutored and ripened by the good Providence of God, for the very

object which now summoned him at the head of our armies. He saw with a prophetick vision, what America might become, if her sons were virtuous, resolute, brave, and persevering. And with an enthusiasm regulated by singular prudence, he directed all the energies of his enlightened and capacious mind, through a long career of action, to attain the golden prize which futurity held in prospect for his country.

There is an era in the history of our struggles, which will never lose its interest, while memory retains her power, or integrity her influence. Our finances were emharrassed. The sources of revenue which our scattered settlements, and our restricted and hazardous commerce yielded, were inadequate to meet the increasing claims which beset an already exhausted treasury. Our troops were deprived of their hard earned wages. The spirit of revolt and disaffection spread itself throughout certain sections of the army. Discord raised her pestilential crest, and there were not wanting talent and influence to welcome her approach—to fan the flame that had been kindled around the altar of freedom, and was fast making its wasteful way to her very pillars. Washington, the idol of the soldier—whose sword was law-whose sentiments were sacred-whose persuasion was resistless—stood then the sentinel of our hopes. But Liberty did not tremble. Had he who passed the Rubicon been there, our history might have been the degraded story of wrongs and bondage. But, the Father of his country never paused. To tamper was to imbibe contagion: to breathe in the air of mutiny, was to inhale its poison. With a righteous indignation of spirit, he rebuked the foul fiend who had dared to whisper infidelity. He calmed the passions which insidious arts had ruffled to mislead. He opened to view the devouring gulph which was eager to destroy in its vortex, all that seven long years of toil and suffering had secured. The demon fled from our ranks. Order returned. Our honest but misguided defenders saw their danger, and shrunk with horrour from the imagination of its consequences. And we live, my countrymen, to admire his unconquered virtues, and to rejoice this happy day, that under heaven, WASHINGTON presided o'er our fortunes.

Long may his name live in the best affections of a people, to whose happiness, his first and last days were consecrated. May his counsels be engraven on the posts of our doors: and may every heart emulate his worth! Let mausolea rise in every city, town, and village to his honour. And let New-York, first in wealth, commercial enterprise, prospective prosperity, intelligence and patriotism, in her park, or some other appropriate square, erect a monumental statue of such dimensions and such materials, that combining beauty with stability, "longum perduret in œvum."

Conqueror of time, he has triumphed over mortality: Legate of heaven, he has returned with the tidings of his mission: Father of his people, he has ascended to repose in the bosom of the father of the spirits of all flesh. Solemn, "as it were a pause in nature," was his transit to eternity; thronged by the shades of heroes, his approach to the confines of bliss; pæaned by the song of angels, his journey beyond the stars.

Born to direct the destiny of empires, his character was as majestick, as the events to which it was attached, were illustrious. In the delineation of its features, the vivid pencil of genius cannot brighten a trait, nor the blighting breath of calumny obscure. His principles were the result of organic philosophy; his success of moral justice. His integrity assumed the port of command; his intelligence, the aspect of inspiration.

Glory, to many impregnable, he obtained without ambition; popularity to all inconstant, he enjoyed without jealousy. The one was his, from admiration: the other, from gratitude. The former embellished, but could not reward; the latter followed, but could never lead him. The robust vigour of his virtue, like the undazzled eye of the eagle, was inaccessible to human weakness: and the unaspiring temperament of his passions, like the regenerated ashes of the phenix, gave new life to the greatness it

could not extinguish. In the imperial dignity of his person. was exhibited the august stature of his mind:

"See what a grace was seated on his brow,
An eye like Mars, the front of Jove himself,
A combination, and a form indeed,
Where every God did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man!"

When his country became free, he was no longer a General. Sublime spectacle! more elevating to the pride of virtue, than the sovereignty of the globe united to the sceptre of ages! Enthroned in the hearts of his countrymen, the gorgeous pageantry of prerogative was unworthy the majesty of his dominion. That effulgence of military character, which, in ancient states, has blasted the rights of the people, whose renown it had brightened, was not here permitted, by the hero, from whom it emanated, to shine with so destructive a lustre. Its beams, though intensely resplendent, did not wither the young blossoms of our independence; and liberty like the burning bush, flourished, unconsumed by the glory which surrounded it.

Fellow citizens! I have dwelt the longer on his character, because I have been taught from my cradle to revere him, and the maturity of reflection, and the authenticity of history, and the soberness of realities, have confirmed and rendered indelible the first impressions.

Yes! and I revere also, the character of his distinguished. gallant, and disinterested coadjutor, whom we hope shortly to welcome to our shores. I would rather shake hands with La Fayette, than with any man on earth. He was my father's fellow soldier and my father's friend: they stood and fought side by side, at Brandywine, and Germantown, at Trenton, Princeton, Monmouth, Yorktown. The only surviving General officer of our revolutionary army, he deserves to be hailed among us, in the patriotick, emphatick, and elegant language of our worthy Recorder, as "the guest of the nation." And he will be so received. New-York will not be outdone by any city in the union. Every vault and every arch will echo and re-echo with his praises. Every sanctuary will send up petitions for the protraction of his useful life, and the happiness of his soul. Every domicile, great or humble, will be ready to welcome his entrance, and esteem itself most highly honoured. Every infant will be taught to pronounce his name. Every patriot will delight to do him homage. And it will be seen to the confusion of the haughty Bourbons, and the deep mortification of every branch and fibre of the unholy alliance, that Republicans are grateful.

We hope, that he means to spend among us, all his remaining days. And when he shall descend into the sepulchre, the sighs of cotemporary gratitude will attend the sublime spirit to its paternal abode; and the prayers of eman-

cipated posterity will ascend in glowing remembrance of their illustrious benefactor! "The laurels, that droop, as they shadow his tomb, with monumental glory, will be cultivated by the tears of ages; and embalmed in the heart of an admiring world, the temple erected to his memory, will be more glorious than the *pyramids*, and as eternal as his own imperishable virtues."

I cannot without injustice to my own feelings, as a man, as a christian, as the warm friend of my country, pass onward, without some notice, of another distinguished, and I may add, with peculiar emphasis, devoted patriot. He is poor, but without spot. If in the councils of the nation, he ever erred, it was unintentionally. When our country was bleeding at every pore—its funds exhausted—its bravest spirits desponding, he introduced into the Commissaries department, a system of economy, which saved us. Well might he exclaim "hundreds and thousands have passed through these hands, but not a cent has ever stuck to them. My labours have ministered to my necessities." I speak not as a politician, but as a philanthropist-not as a federalist, nor a democrat, but as an American: not as the partizan of the secretary of the treasury, or the secretary of state, or the secretary at war, or the speaker of the house of representatives, or even the hero of Orleans. I am for them all. Let the people select. And they will select. And no danger will follow, let their choice fall, on whomsoever it may. Their intelligence will keep the president, always on the alert, and in the path of duty. No despotism will sap the foundation of their liberties. No war will be declared without their consent. Their purse will not be picked. The march of internal improvements will not be arrested. Thank God! I am a freeman, and therefore can speak boldly. Myself, grossly traduced, I will advocate the innocent. My life on it, no man deserves better of his country—my life on it, no man will receive a warmer embrace from La Fayette, than the venerable Timothy Pickering.

Assembled to celebrate this eventful epoch in American history, we should by no means withhold our humble tribute of gratitude and praise to the gracious author of all our mercies. His providence guided our arms. When amidst difficulties and dangers, a superior foe—superior in numbers and the munitions of war: but not superior in courage and devoted patriotism, threatened desolation to our cities and villages: when our reduced, and retreating, and discouraged forces almost despaired—In that dark hour, when the heart of the virtuous patriot sunk within him, and in agony trembled o'er his hopes—He who rules in the armies of heaven was on our side. He encouraged the desponding warriour. He infused new wisdom into our cabinet. He overruled the events of the appalling crisis. He blessed us with victory, and peace, and freedom.

And every returning year of our national existence through each section of this vast continent, furnishes abundant causes for gratitude and joy. Loudly as foreign politicians may have declaimed against a republican government; forcibly as they may have endeavoured to pourtray the weakness and the anarchy which will flow from its forms: yet, for forty-eight years, has it withstood the shocks of time: and at this favoured hour, it presents in all its diversified operations, the spectacle of a free, a prosperous, and an united people. Whilst the governments of the old world have been shaken, and crushed, and overturned, America, republican America, stands firm like the rock by yonder ocean: and the collisions which have agitated its citizens, have been only the convulsions of the waters that died harmless at its base. It is now more firmly secure than ever, by the safest of all palladium's—the hearts of the people. This is a bulwark, my countrymen, which power cannot claim: which the wealth of worlds cannot purchase. America owns it. Survey the interesting scene. Fruitful fields! Powerful cities! Flourishing villages! Domestic tranquility! Universal harmony! Friend can now meet friend, without a bitter feeling. The prejudice of the heart is removed. The jaundice of the eye is cured. No ban of proscription now excludes from the social circle. No invidious line of demarkation is run along through the relations of society, which, with a strange magick hand, had the awful power to divide the strongest cords of nature, to

poison the very milk of human kindness, and array a brother in arms. My countrymen! my countrymen! let us here dig the grave, and bury forever in its bosom, all divisions and animosities, which have only weakened our government and distressed ourselves.

Distinguished by such inestimable blessings as those which signalise our lot, our duties become solemnly responsible. Obligations reach every individual, however humble his station, or limited his influence. The legacy which our fathers secured by their labours and fortitude. and sealed with their blood, is now confided to the care of us their children. We rule ourselves. This is the essence of republican government, and the plainest man among you perceives in the very statement, that the rulers must be virtuous, or the laws can neither be just nor good. Vice is the reproach of any people: but it is the certain ruin of a free people. Oh, my countrymen! improve your privileges! They exalt you to the heavens! I conjure you, beware that they come not down in wrath! Let each member of this great family feel, that in a sense, and in a strong sense too, the welfare of the whole is entrusted to himself. The tenant of the humblest cottage can be useful. In the steady pursuit of industrious habits-in repressing within his sphere the inroads of vice—in adorning his lowly shed with piety and virtue, he may, and often does exert an influence far, far more happy in itself, more honourable to

God, and more salutary to man, than the proud sons of power ever could attain. Let the merchant, the husbandman, the mechanic, the manufacturer, the bone of all our strength, the true source of national prosperity, be urged by the consideration of their vast importance, to active perseverance in the cultivation of the arts of peace. Your country's best hopes rest on you. When your hand slackens, her vigour sleeps. If a single wanderer from among your industrious ranks strays into the wayward paths of dissipation and indolence, one pillar of her pride is gone.— And for your encouragement, never forget, that true honour is substantial, and that honest industry receives her praise. In the estimation of human merit, he deserves most, who fulfils the duties of his station with most fidelity: and no matter where that station may be, on the scale of an useful gradation, "Act well your part; there all the honour lies." Whilst you continue virtuous and faithful, nothing will disturb our security. Time will only strengthen the foundations of government. All the venom of the unholy alliance cannot poison us. All the power of legitimacy, falsely so called, (for there is no legitimacy but that which originates in the people,) all the power of self-styled legitimacy cannot crush us. America, still republican, still intelligent, still united, will be the land of the brave, and the home of the free. But if that melancholy day should ever arrive, when the busy hum of your manufacturing establishments shall cease; when the cheering sounds of

the anvil and the sledge, the hammer and the nail, the distaff and the wheel, the shuttle and the loom, the axe, the hoe, and the plough, shall be heard no more, then farewell liberty! for her strength and her nutriment will have fled forever.

May I be permitted to add, without incurring the charge of too much gallantry, that to Columbia's fair daughters, much of publick usefulness and honour is fairly to be traced. The wise and good of all generations have regarded the tender sex as the last refuge of virtue. Where woman is degraded, man is a savage. The first gleam of light that pervaded the darkness of the middle ages, was announced by the homage paid to female worth: and as civilization has advanced, it has always been more highly appreciated. At the fireside of female watchfulness, many a blessing to these United States is fostered. If that love of truth and righteousness-that ardent benevolence and expansive sympathy, from which alone, the cause of humanity can hope for support, are to be found on earth, in purity and simplicity, it is in the bosom of the amiable, accomplished, and intelligent female. Retiring and unobtrusive, her influence, in point of numbers, is not perhaps extensive: but within the sphere of its operation, it is powerful, and it is decisive. To her it belongs to unfold the powers of the infantile mind—to instill the earliest precepts of virtue to impress the earliest feelings of humanity—to form at once the understanding, the imagination, and the heartAround the domestick board and altar are inculcated the first great principles which give impetus to the future character. Here are elicited the first scintillations of those luminaries of science, which shoot their rays into the remotest time. And here too, man finds a solace for his cares, and a resting place for his wearied bosom.

"Domestick happiness! thou only bliss
Of Paradise, that has survived the fall!
Thou art the nurse of virtue! In thine arms,
She smiles, appearing as in truth she is,
Heaven-born, and destined to the skies again!"

When I behold a pious mother inculcating on the sacred pledges of her affection, the lessons of wisdom and virtue; directing the new born ideas of her children; and fixing upon the pliant mind the impress of truth; tempering heroick fortitude with the gentleness of compassion, and manly vigour of intellect with the tenderest affections of the heart, I rejoice in this happy spectacle as the best safeguard of my country's prosperity.

Firemen of the city of New-York! It is an honour to address you. You are, without a solitary exception, the most useful and important class of our citizens! our wives and children, our property, ourselves, our insurance companies, our banking institutions, and all our commercial interests in all their bearings and relations, depend, under

God, on you for protection and preservation. You are benevolent. The widow's furrowed brow is smoothed, and the orphan's tears are wiped away by the hand of your beneficence. You cultivate among yourselves the spirit of brotherly love. Always act in harmony. And every man in this community, whose opinion is worth regarding, will view you, and treat you as possessed of the highest res pectability. You are exempted, it is true, in consequence of your signal usefulness in other respects, from sitting on a jury, and from enrolling yourselves on the catalogue of the militia. Yet, by your personal influence, you may protect the purity of the laws. And I doubt not, for a moment, should a hostile invader pollute our soil, you would cast away your privilege, fall into the ranks and spill your blood. Yes! and I will add, without arrogance or ostentation, that I am ready with a bible in one hand, and a sword in other, to be your chaplain. A Bible! yes, my countrymen! I can recommend nothing to be compared with it. Its influence will be as lasting as time. Generations yet unknown, shall feel and venerate its power in all the freshness of youthful vigour. Opposition to its free course only sends deeper and deeper its expansive and outstretching roots, until they will grasp the globe we inhabit; and when it reels, this beauteous fabrick of things will fall with it, into the peaceful bosom of eternity.

The Almighty has decreed it: and more rational would be the sickly efforts of infatuated man to rule the boisterous ocean, lashed by impending storms, than to resist the immortal reign of his truth. Deism and Socinianism have already done their utmost. Hume has pierced the sacred word by the malignant exercise of a genius, acute in thought, and pointed in reasoning. Gibbon, with insidious art, has levelled his keenest satire at its peculiarities. Voltaire and Paine, Bolingbroke and Shaftsbury, have at successive periods exhausted their venom, in lampooning the oracles of our faith. Yet, like its author, the Bible has never tasted of corruption, but has burst the bands of oppression, and arisen with new splendour from its attempted humiliation. Like some huge, towering rock of the ocean, the waves of opposition have for centuries broke against it, but it still remains a friendly beacon to the wary, and a well-known land mark in his voyage to an eternal haven. But who is Hume? And who is the baptized infidel, Unitarian, improperly so denominated, of modern days? Can he compare with Newton? Newton, who made the devious Comet his post-horse, and travelled through its excentric orbit up to nature's God. Can sophistry outweigh the testimony of him who heard the morning stars shout the praises of the hand that arrayed them? Can he compare with Locke, with Bacon, who abandoning the delusions of metaphysicks, investigated man as they found him; and through the wonderful combination of his mysterious faculties, traced out the mechanism of an all-wise hand? Can Hume, or Priestley, or a host of talents equally splendid, overcome the pointed evidence of experience: experience, which exhibits to us, the pillow of death, bereft of its thorns, the freezing horrours of the grave, and the awful uncertainties of an untried hereafter, met with composure—nay, embraced with ecstacy?

The Bible has withstood not only the iron tooth of time, but all the physical and all the intellectual strength of man. It has been assailed by weapons which would have destroyed any other book: and yet it survives. The arsenals of learning have been employed to arm her for the contest: and in search of means to prosecute it with success, recourse has been had, not only to remote ages, and distant lands, but even to the bowels of the earth, and the region of the It has been ridiculed more bitterly, misrepresented more grossly, opposed more rancorously, and burnt more frequently than any other book, and perhaps, than all other books combined: yet, it is so far from sinking under the efforts of its foes, that the probability, nay, the certainty of its surviving, until the final consummation of all things, is now established. The rain has descended: The floods have poured forth: The storm has beat upon it: but it falls not; for it is founded on a rock. Like the burning bush, it has ever been in the flames-yet, it is still unconsumed: a

proof, strong as its own holy writ, that he who dwelt in the bush, the great God our Saviour, preserves the Bible.

Press it then closely, and yet more warmly to your hearts. It will deliver you from the fury of the devouring element which is eternal, after you have preserved others from that which is temporal.

Permit me to add, that I mourn sincerely with you, over the recent loss which you have sustained, by the death of one of your most amiable and worthy associates.* You are called to-day to sing of judgment as well as mercy. We sympathize with the afflicted widow. Our hearts bleed for the orphan children. And oh! is it inappropriate in a minister of Jesus Christ, affectionately to exhort you, to be admonished by this premature and sudden departure, to keep your lamps trimmed and burning, your loins girt, and to be always ready for the coming of the Son of Man?

FELLOW CITIZENS!

Our circumstances are most auspicious. The late war has made us eminently one people. Discrepancies of opinion, on various points, will from the very conformation of the

^{*} Mr. James Quick, one of the Committee of Arrangements, who was in perfect health on the last Saturday of June, and a corpse on the following Monday.

human intellect, exist. Yet, on all great national topicks, on all that is vital; on all that is indentified with true republicanism, and real liberty, we are amalgamated. The generous, and hospitable, and frank, and eloquent son of Erinthe honest, and reflecting, and brave Caledonian—the unsophisticated Welchman-the lineal descendants of the faithful martyred Huguenots—the hardy and vigorous German the intrepid Hollander, distinguished for his patient perseverance, his personal integrity, his admirable adherence to the unadulterated truths of revelation—these, these, blended with the sons of the pilgrims, the adventurers of Oglethorpe, the followers of Raleigh, the pacifick disciples of Penn, and the Swedes of Jersey, together constitute a body of sound thinking, and a column of patriotism, that, I trust, will never be destroyed, until the mighty angel planting one foot on the earth, and the other on the ocean, shall lift his hand to heaven, and swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no more.

"Mid the thunders of war, and the fury of flame
Rose Columbia's eagle in glory aspiring!
And long shall he soar in the regions of flame,
Till earth is in ruins, and ocean retiring!
Indpendent and free
Our motto shall be,
And death to the foe who saps Liberty's tree!
For ne'er shall the lion of Europe regain
The empire he lost o'er the land and the main."

