

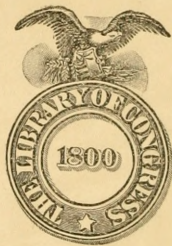
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AN

ORATION,

COMMEMORATIVE OF

WASHINGTON.

DELIVERED FEB. 22, 1821.

By HOOPER CUMMING, A. M.

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



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1821.

Albany, Feb. 26, 1821.

Rev. Mr. CUMMING,

SIR,

The committee, (appointed by the general committee of the several uniform companies of this city,) have the pleasure of enclosing to you a copy of a Resolution, unanimously passed by them on Friday evening the 23d inst.

In obedience to their wishes, and my own feelings, I request that you will favour me with a copy of your very eloquent and appropriate Oration, delivered by you on the 22d inst., for publication.

I remain, Rev. Sir,

With respect,

Your obedient servant,

P. LANSING, Jun. Chairman, &c.



At a meeting of the General Committee of the several Uniform Companies of this City, held at Wilcox's Hotel on Friday evening, 23d Feb. 1821.

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of the committee, (in behalf of the several uniform companies,) be presented to the Rev. HOOPER CUMMING for his very eloquent and appropriate Oration, delivered by him on the 22d inst., and that he be requested to furnish the committee with a copy for

publication; and that Mr. Lansing, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Mayell, Mr. White and Mr. Young, be a committee to present this resolution.

Albany, 23d Feb. 1821.

(A Copy.)



Mr. P. Lansing, Jun. Chairman, &c.

SIR,

In compliance with the wishes of the very respectable committee, appointed by the uniform companies at whose request it was written and pronounced, I enclose you a copy of my Oration.

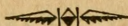
With sincere friendship,

I remain yours,

HOOPER CUMMING.

Albany, Feb. 26, 1821.

ORATION.



WHEN a nation rises in its strength, to burst the fetters of tyranny, the world becomes a deeply-interested spectator. All men, whose selfishness is not arrayed against the cause of freedom, palpitate with anxiety for a successful termination of the conflict. Angels, who watch and ponder the transactions of our globe, because every transpiring event is more or less intimately blended with the ultimate prosperity of Zion, view with sedulous attention the gathering tempest. The Omnipotent himself, by whose providence these movements are organized and controlled, nerves the patriot's arm, and crushes into atoms the throne of despotism.

It is to celebrate the evolution of such principles and such deeds of glory, combined yet various, tending to a common centre, yet all luminous and resplendent, that we have convened this morning in the Sanctuary of God. It is no unhallowed

festivity that has summoned us: no unseemly riot mars the passing hours: no superstitious, emasculating, or at best unprofitable observance, rouses us to action. We have met to praise departed greatness—to offer the homage of our gratitude to the Divine Benefactor—to retrace the efforts of philanthropy—and stimulating each other to worthy acts, by the remembrance of all that was heroic and benign and disinterested and pure and praiseworthy, to swear on the altar of our country's liberties, eternal enmity to oppression, eternal devotedness to the cause of freedom.

No employment, except the services of religion, can be more edifying to an American citizen, than the consecration to patriotism of a day like this. It revives the recollection of the fortitude and self-denial, the magnanimity and prowess, the zeal and wisdom of his ancestors. His imagination follows them in their various plans of emancipation from the curse of monarchy; weeps with them in their adversity; sympathizes with their every struggle; and shouts for joy when success crowns their manly and almost superhuman efforts. Influenced by such sentiments, he rolls his eye along the ranks of embattled legions panting for the privileges of freemen, until it fixes with admiring gaze on the

lofty chieftain. If upright intentions sanctified his career of glory;—if he lived not to himself, but to the publick;—if his sword were unsheathed for the protection of the innocent alone;—if it voluntarily returned to its scabbard at the proper hour;—if, the cause of liberty secured, the soldier with cheerfulness retired to the walks of private citizenship;—if with avidity he seized the first suitable occasion to convince mankind that chastened ambition was hallowed in its purposes and salutary in its tendency, the lineaments of his character are surveyed with a pride, a pleasure, a gratitude, I had almost said, an adoration bordering on enthusiasm.

Such a man was he, the anniversary of whose birth we to-day commemorate. Born and nurtured for a specifick purpose, every faculty of his nature and every dispensation of Divine Providence toward him, challenges alike the self-rewarding investigations of the philosopher, the eulogy of the patriot and the devout thankfulness of the Christian. A crisis in the destinies of nations was approaching when Washington was summoned into being. Long had the world groaned in vassallage. As one among the many poisonous fruits of the apostacy in Eden, the monstrous doctrine of tame sub-

mission to mere men because enrobed in royalty, however unrighteous and however oppressive their decrees, had, by an almost immemorial usage, been admitted as an axiom in political casuistry. The king and the peasant were two distinct orders of mankind: and all the gradations of Dukes and Marquises and Earls and Viscounts must be passed by the gracious condescension of the Monarch, ere he could look with aught of benignity on the rabble who wore not an aristocratick star. Passive obedience to the hereditary king, although peradventure he were an hereditary idiot or an hereditary debauchee, was the only sentiment proper to be inculcated on the vulgar herd. But the Father of Mercies had ordained a better state of things for his children of the human family. *He looked down from the height of his Sanctuary, and beheld with pity the tears which in quick succession chased each other on the cheek of vassallage: He heard the groaning of the prisoner: and hastened to loose those that were appointed unto death.*

In the chain of second causes, he connects with every desired end, a suitable instrumentality; and promotes human happiness by human agency.—Hence, that his benevolent designs might assuredly be furthered, he created and duly qualified for

the noble work, that man, whom we appropriately designate as the Deliverer of our country.

Washington was called into existence at an epoch, and reared amid circumstances, in all respects most conducive to the prosperity of that cause of which he was the destined champion.— With the authenticated accounts of the discovery of this continent, and its subsequent settlement, more particularly, that part of it which is comprised within the limits of these United States, you are, as I presume, familiar. From the habits of thinking which pervaded that accumulating population which was fleeing to the wilds of America from the persecuting policy of civil and ecclesiastical domination, it were not reasonably to be supposed, that a sovereignty would be long acknowledged which did not guarantee to its subjects the enjoyment of equal rights. Taxation, unaccompanied with the privilege of being represented, was a burthen and an outrage from which nature's noblemen at once revolted. An army of hirelings was embarked to enforce the dictates of tyranny. They were promptly met. Discipline, tacticks, military subordination for a while prevailed; but love of country not of lucre, the rights of man, not the dogmas of oppression were soon to gain the pre-

ponderance. A corps of patriots convened by their country's voice, became an host within itself.—Numbers could neither inthrall nor intimidate them: for Washington was their leader. Urged to the command by a deliberative assembly, the most firm and prudent, the most resolute and dispassionate, the most unassuming and collected, the most meek and decided, on whose councils the light of Heaven ever shed a cheering ray, he, with all his characteristick diffidence and caution, could not refuse. It was the cause of human nature which the Advocates of Independence pleaded. That Congress which selected Washington as the military commander, merited and received from the most eloquent legislator of the age, the following encomium: “When your Lordships look at the papers transmitted us from America; when you consider their decency, firmness and wisdom; you cannot but respect their cause, and wish to make it your own. For myself, I must declare and avow, that in all my reading and observation—and it has been my favourite study—I have read Thucydides, and have studied and admired the master states of the world—that for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion, under such a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in prefer-

ence to the general Congress at Philadelphia. I trust it is obvious to your Lordships, that all attempts to impose upon such men, to establish despotism over such a mighty continental nation, must be vain, must be fatal. We shall be forced ultimately to retract: let us retract while we can, not when we must. I say, we must necessarily undo these violent, oppressive acts. They must be repealed. You will repeal them. I stake my reputation on it—I will consent to be taken for an idiot, if they are not repealed. Avoid then this humiliating, disgraceful necessity. With a dignity becoming your exalted situation, make the first advances to concord, to peace and happiness.”— Thus spoke Chatham in the outset of the contest. And the great Burke declared, “If we are conscious of our situation, and glow with zeal to fill our place as becomes our station and ourselves, we ought to auspicate all our publick proceedings on America, with the old warning of the church, *Sursum corda.*”

The contrast between the representatives of freemen, and delegates who reasoned and acted on the principles of hirelings, was conspicuous. The interests of the former were identified with the happiness of their common country: The mo-

tives and conduct of the latter were subordinated to the local views of despots. A blind and selfish policy stimulated their determinations: But a love of liberty guided the counsels and inflamed the zeal of the Continental Congress. Under their auspices Washington took the field.

The heroes of former times had many flattering prospects to encourage them. Defeat itself could not be more ignominious than the condition on which their lives and fortunes were suspended. The numbers, the wealth, and the collected courage which were pledged for their support, would prove sources of consolation even amid the discomfitures of defeat. But an army possessed of no resources other than a conviction of the righteousness of their cause, and a resolution to perish rather than abandon it, Washington was called to lead. Humility and moderation, circumspection and more than Fabian prudence, fearless intrepidity, patience in suffering rebukes, and a pious confidence in the overruling and benign Providence of the God of battles, were essential qualifications for the arduous office. These were all transcendently exemplified. In the hour of disappointment, and amid the shouts of victory, the hero was alike worthy of commendation. Whether watching from

the heights of Dorchester, the movements of his enemy; or retiring from the blood-stained fields of Brooklyn; or speeding his way across the plains of Jersey; or circumventing and surprizing the debauched allies of the King; or following up his successes on the classick grounds of Princeton; or disciplining his militia, or sharing their unexampled privations at Valley-Forge; or submitting to have victory snatched from his eager grasp at Germantown; or roused to a high-toned and vehement indignation by the disobedience and malignity of Lee at Monmouth; or there, by retrieving the disasters of a premature retreat, through the timely interposition of undaunted valour and matchless skill, compelling his enemy to abandon his position without daring to risk another contest; or suppressing mutinies inseparable from the very constitution of our nature when goaded with superhuman sufferings, now by his personal influence, his parental admonitions, his persuasive appeals to the love of country—then by the prompt application of punitive justice, when necessity demanded; or extinguishing the sparks of civil discord at the moment they were kindling into flame, and preventing the citizens of two adjoining states from imbruing their hands in each other's blood; or rendering abortive the intended mischief and averting from his coun-

trymen the evil consequences of the treachery of Arnold; or crushing by his heroism and weight of character, the insidious and diabolical designs of the infamous Newburgh letters; or besieging without a previous warning, and forcing to a surrendry within the intrenchments of Yorktown, the chief and fairest hopes of the gallant British army; he is equally entitled to our gratitude, our veneration and our praise. Greece has had her Epaminondas, Rome her Scipio Africanus, Scotland her Wallace, but America has produced her unrivalled Washington. Born to command, he ruled but for the welfare of other men: destined to human reverence, he lost not sight of the fact that he was a mere and a dying mortal: idolized by millions, he conferred the glory on that exalted Being to whom it was richly due.

Having secured the independence of his country, he voluntarily and cheerfully resigned his commission into the hands of the duly-constituted authorities from whom it was originally received. A more august spectacle was scarcely ever presented to the eye of man. The representatives of a brave, magnanimous, enlightened people listening to the parting accents of a disinterested hero;—receiving back from him that sword with which they had en-

trusted him for the protection of all that is dear to the heart of freedom;—mutually reciprocating emotions of the most thrilling gratitude to Heaven;—an emancipated empire gazing on with admiration and with rapture;—despots trembling;—the conqueror himself arrayed in meekness, and bowing to the majesty of the laws:—centuries will roll away, the Sun exhaust his fires, the Moon wear out her cheering radiance, and the Stars of yonder firmament abate their twinkling:—but another contexture of objects, so cheering to the bosom of the patriot, so animating to the best hopes of philanthropy, will not recur.

The unparalleled man retires, followed by universal benedictions, to the scenes of his youthful employments and his earliest joys.

But his publick services had by no means ended. The rural delights of his beloved Vernon, though sought with avidity, and urging his lawful claims to their embrace on the ground of his past long-continued self-denials and privations, and toils and sufferings, must be abandoned:—for patriotism—patriotism unadulterated by love of lucre, untarnished by even a suggestion of criminal ambition, again predominated. Attachment to the peaceful, tranquil-

lizing occupations of husbandry was ardent—but love of country was the ruling passion. A code of government more equal, more efficient, more benign than the confederation of the States, formed as it was amid emergencies and amid uncontrollable embarrassments, was imperiously called for by the languishing state of commerce, by the appalling depreciation of property, by the almost total loss of mutual confidence in pecuniary transactions, and by an uncharitable, a selfish spirit of rivalry amounting in some cases to persecution, in many to injustice, in all to the excitement of animosities that threatened the speedy subversion of our dear bought liberties. A *national government* was required—a *federal head*, with sufficient vigour to combine against every recurrence of publick exigence, the powers of the several independent sovereignties. Talents, such as Washington possessed, distinguished for cool deliberation, profound thought, consummate prudence, patient industry, unwearied investigation, luminous deductions, firm decisions, incorruptible intentions, were put in requisition. His country called: with filial piety he obeyed. Repairing to the spot which concentrated the wisdom and virtue of the nation, he presided o'er the councils of statesmen whose sagacity and purity the world acknowledged and revered; and by the elevation of

his views, the influence of his example, the dignity of his demeanour, the very magick of his presence, contributed eminently to the adoption and subsequent ratification of our unparalleled constitution.

All eyes were now fastened on him, as the most appropriate executive organ of the government.— His sense of duty once more triumphed over personal inclinations; and he embarked on an untried ocean, the precious character he had acquired. But the remotest posterity will declare, what we all believe, that it is impossible to ascertain in what respect he merits the warmest eulogy, whether while leading the republick to conquest on the field of battle, or elevating and consolidating her happiest destinies in a time of peace. Unanimously called and even urged to the first office in the gift of the people, he entered on its duties with his characteristic modesty and uprightness. Modesty is the inseparable companion of great minds. Its unusual ascendancy over the exalted powers of Washington, was doubtless one among a multitude of natural causes, that produced the overflowing admiration, gratitude, and enthusiasm, of a magnanimous, a reflecting, and an enlightened nation. He could not pass to the seat of government, without being thronged in every stage of his progress, by

his delighted countrymen. His fellow-citizens of the first character and station vied with each other in lavishing encomiums. Thousands, whom he had instructed in the use of arms, and the only legitimate purposes for which they must be wielded, flew to be his escorts. And even the unassuming, retiring, gentle sex, erected the triumphal arch.— Venerable matrons taught their lisping children to rehearse his praises: “The Defender of the Mothers will also protect their Daughters.” The delicate and vestal hand scatters garlands in his path: while from the unsullied lips of virgin innocence flows a tribute the more acceptable, because perfectly appropriate and sincere.

“Welcome mighty chief! once more,
 Welcome to this grateful shore!
 Now no mercenary foe
 Aims again the fatal blow,
 Aims at thee the fatal blow!
 Virgins fair and matrons grave,
 (These thy conquering arm did save!)
 Build for thee triumphal bowers:
 Strew ye fair, his way with flowers,
 Strew your hero’s way with flowers.”

He entered on the duties of the Presidency, with the same devotedness to the best interests of mankind, the same acknowledgment of the overruling

and special Providence of God, which had distinguished his previous career. Surrounded by difficulties great enough to have appalled an ordinary mind, he evinced equal firmness and prudence, parental affection to his constituents, and a magnanimity to foreign nations which challenged their profound respect, and secured the prosperity of his people. Eight successive years witnessed the glowing ardour of his patriotism and the matchless wisdom of his councils. He again voluntarily retires to the shades of private life, impressing upon his fellow-citizens, with all the benignity of an anxious father, those sage and wholesome maxims for the future guidance of their conduct, to which, with mingled gratitude and admiration you have this morning listened. He closes his publick life as he began it, with an act of religion: "*repeating his fervent supplications to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe and Sovereign Arbiter of nations, that his providential care might still be extended to the United States; that the virtue and happiness of the people might be preserved; and that the government which they had instituted for the protection of their liberties might be perpetual.*" His country, by the blessing of God on his administration, in full enjoyment of liberty without licentiousness, religion without bigotry, and the means of rapid advancement in valuable know-

ledge of every kind, gazed on him with enthusiastic love. Their heart went with him to the scenes of that calm and philosophical enjoyment which he preferred to every other; and while he was reaping both pleasure and improvement from the noble employments of agriculture, and while he was cultivating an intercourse with Heaven, they environed him with their benedictions and their prayers. Their affectionate solicitude smoothed his decline down the hill of life; and when he died, the tears of unaffected grief suffused their manly cheeks. "O our father," they exclaimed, "wherefore has the Almighty so grievously afflicted us?"

"How sleep the brave who sink to rest,
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring with dewy fingers cold
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.
By fairy hands their knell is rung,
By forms unseen their dirge is sung;
There Honour comes a pilgrim grey,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair,
To dwell a weeping hermit there."

The fame of Washington is co-extensive with the earth—and in its ultimate consequences, his success in promoting the cause of liberty and science and li-

terature and the arts and pure morality and undefiled religion, will exert a powerful influence on all the civilized nations of our world. What am I saying? It has produced already an effect more benign, more auspicious to the best interests of mankind, than any antecedent cause, the introduction of Christianity alone excepted. To the glorious issue of the American revolution, the nations of Europe are indebted for all their comparative liberty, so superiour in a multitude of instances, to the abject vassallage under which they previously groaned. It has given to the human intellect a tone, an energy, a luminous expansion. It has prompted and rewarded freedom of inquiry. To the Christian it has taught the profitable lesson, that no man has a right to exercise dominion over the conscience; but that in every article of faith, the Bible is God's vicergerent. It has subdued the wildness of religious intolerance. It has allayed the furious spirit of persecution. It has tamed the ferocity of war.— It has exhibited in streams of light the wholesome doctrine, that we are brethren, entitled to equal privileges, and bound to consult each others' welfare. Yes, Americans, you will permit me to indulge a holy enthusiasm. The example of our father will instruct and benefit remotest ages. Unrestricted to results pertaining to "the life that now

is," it has produced a developement of principle and of action most auspicious to the cause of the Redeemer. The wilderness of ignorance and superstition already begins to blossom as the rose. The throne of spiritual despotism totters to its base. The path of the humble and fervent Missionary is unobstructed by the lumber of ages.—The thousand films of prejudice which covered the eye of reason with a Cimmerian darkness have been removed: and the light of revelation is pouring its mild and genial effulgence to guide and bless the most distant regions. The illustrious epoch is rapidly advancing, when among the other happy results of the American revolution, we can trace the conversion to Christ of myriads of Pagans. Already attracted hither by the benignity of our laws, a population who have left behind them all but their innocent prejudices, are blending into one, and combining and harmonizing their efforts to spread the triumphs of the Bible. America their country:—the world the prisoner whom they desire to emancipate. Here, in the land of religious freedom, you will find engaged in the same benevolent and holy cause, impelled by no policy of state, circumvented by no rules imposed by the arrogance of a monarch, alarmed by no denunciations of a metropolitan, the generous and frank

and hospitable and eloquent natives of the *Emerald Isle*; the unsophisticated and honest *Welchman*; the lineal descendants of the faithful, martyred *Huguenots*; the brave and hardy, the vigorous and reflecting *German*; the intrepid *Hollander*, distinguished for his patient perseverance in honest toils, his personal integrity, his admirable adherence to the unadulterated truths of revelation; and that noble people to whose character the splendid Phillips has recently borne the following richly-merited testimonial, "Wherever they tread, temperance and industry attest their presence: a primeval piety consecrates their church; peace and plenty meet upon their plains; and the laurel which their genius and their heroism have won, is intertwined with the palm-leaf of an immaculate morality.— Let *Scotland* then, even if she stood alone, prove the advantage of an educated peasantry: and should the sceptick awake not at her voice, may the spirit of Burns pass across his slumber, and burst upon him in the blaze of its refutation."

When such a people amalgamating their energies, and borrowing daily improvement from the increasing lights of literature and the arts, resolve to consecrate to God, to their common country, and to mankind, their several faculties, what elevated

hopes may we not cherish respecting the future glory of America!

My fellow citizens! I fervently congratulate you, that the example of Washington is perpetually guiding you like a polar star in all your researches after usefulness. Imitate his patriotism, his disinterestedness, his morality, his religion. Fear not reproach, while pursuing your onward course in the path of duty. Remember, that—"calumny is the shadow of merit, and that—though it ever follows, it never overtakes it." Washington was slandered! but did defamation arrest him in his high career? No! he lived not to himself, but to the benefit of others: and conscious, that his intentions were hallowed, he thought it wicked to desist. In all your conduct, inquire how would Washington have acted? His head and his heart were both so extraordinarily good, that 'tis safe, perfectly safe for Americans to adopt his maxims, to tread in his footsteps, to think as he thought, to act as he acted. Are we soldiers, or do we fill a more retired and less splendid station? Are we magistrates or private citizens? Are we ministers or people? In the spring, or the winter of life? Prosperous, or smitten with adversity? Our political Father, by his own excellent example, in varied, peculiar, and

trying exigencies, instructs us amply. Never did he bathe his sword in the blood of innocence; never did he corrupt the purity of the sex; never did he cajole the populace with the impositions of the demagogue, nor flatter them by falsehoods into a surrendry of their rights: His ambition was consecrated to the publick weal. Never did he oppose insidiously, nor with outrage, lawful power: never did he lend his aid to the malignant efforts of an infidel philosophy; but gloried in the name of Christian. Never did he take undue advantage of his successes and his influence; but improved them sedulously for the good of others: and when he was visited with disappointments, he humbly bowed and silently kissed the rod which smote him, believing that this world was not his home, and seeking another, even an heavenly country.

An imitation of his example, is the best memorial of his birth, and life and services—the most enduring and splendid monument that we can erect to his glory. Let the Fathers teach the children: and let the youthful patriot gladden the emotions of the aged bosom, by adopting him as the pattern and exemplar. Then shall the intemperate, overheated, bigotted, irreconcilable hatred between man and man, engendered by the accursed spirit

of party, yield to the influence of better principles. We shall all be Americans. A halo of glory shall encircle our wide-spreading empire. "The star-spangled banner" will wave triumphant on every ocean. The prowess of such heroes as bled on Bunker's heights, at Saratoga, at Eutaw; and in more recent days at Queenstown and Bridgewater, at Baltimore and New-Orleans, at Chippewa and Erie and Williamsburgh, will be the fruitful themes of poetical penegyric—While the unexampled victories of Perry and Macdonough, and Decatur and Jones, and Hull and Bainbridge, will serve as a torch to kindle the flames of patriotism, and light our grandsons to the spot where they will conquer and still be free.

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