

**AMERICAN STATE
PAPERS**

'Tis Liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its luster and perfume;
And we are weeds without it. All constraint
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,
Is evil: hurts the faculties, impedes
Their progress in the road of science, blinds
The eyesight of discovery; and begets,
In those that suffer it, a sordid mind,
Bestial, a meager intellect, unfit
To be the tenant of man's noble form."

— *Cowper.*

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LEGISLATIVE - EXECUTIVE - JUDICIAL

AMERICAN STATE PAPERS

BEARING ON
SUNDAY LEGISLATION

REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION

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A GREAT SPEECH.

BY PATRICK HENRY, IN THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, INDEPENDENCE HALL, PHILADELPHIA, JULY 4, 1776.

[The following is the greater portion of the famous speech made by Patrick Henry, the fiery orator of Virginia, July 4, 1776, in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, just before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which is said to have carried his hearers along the path of conviction until every one was ready not only to sign the Declaration itself but to sacrifice all, that the colonies might be free from the yoke of foreign oppression:]¹

These words will go forth to the world when our bones are dust. To the slave in bondage they will speak hope; to the mechanic in his workshop, freedom. . . .

That parchment will speak to kings in language sad and terrible as the trumpet of the archangel. You have trampled on the rights of mankind long enough. At last, the voice of human woe has pierced the ear of God, and called his judgment down. . . .

The message of the Declaration of Independence.

¹ During the discussion over the Declaration of Independence some pale-faced man shrinking in the corner was heard to say something about "axes, scaffolds, and a — gibbet." This seems to have been the signal for this eloquent, inspiring, and intrepid speech, and to explain the allusion in it to the "gibbet" and "axes." "Gibbet!" the patriot shouted in a fierce, bold tone that startled men from their seats and rang through the hall, as he rose to his feet. Then, slowly stretching out his white, trembling hand, he continued:

The signal for the speech.

"Gibbet! They may stretch our necks on all the gibbets in the land; they may turn every rock into a scaffold, every tree into a gallows, every home into a grave, and yet the words of that parchment can never die.

Opening words of the speech.

"They may pour blood upon a thousand scaffolds, and yet from every drop that dyes the ax, or drops on the sawdust of the block, a new martyr of freedom will spring into birth!

"The British King may blot out the stars of God from his sky, but he cannot blot out the words written on the parchment there. The works of God may perish; His word, never!"

Then followed the speech as here given. The copy from which this is republished is credited to the *Boston Journal*, but without date.

Such is the message of the Declaration to the kings of the world. And shall we falter now? And shall we start back appalled when our free people press the very threshold of freedom? . . .

Sign! sign!
sign!

Sign! if the next moment the gibbet's rope is around your neck. Sign! if the next moment this hall rings with the echo of the falling ax. Sign! by all your hopes in life, or death, as husbands, fathers — as men with our names to the parchment, or be accursed forever!! Sign! not only for yourselves, but for all ages; for that parchment will be the text book of freedom — the Bible of the rights of man forever.

Like the
voice of God.

Sign! for the declaration will go forth to American hearts like the voice of God. And its work will not be done until throughout this wide continent not a single inch of ground owns the sway of privilege of power.

It is not given to our poor human intellect to climb the skies, to pierce the councils of the Almighty One. But methinks I stand among the awful clouds which veil the brightness of Jehovah's throne. Methinks I see the recording angel — pale as an angel is pale, weeping as an angel can weep — come trembling up to the throne and speaking his dreadful message.

The an-
gel's message
of woe.

Father! The old world is baptized in blood. Father! It is drenched with the blood of millions who have been executed, in slow and grinding oppression. Father, look! With one glance of thine eternal eye, look over Europe, Asia, Africa, and behold everywhere a terrible sight — man trodden down beneath the oppressor's feet, nations lost in blood, murder and superstition walking hand in hand over the graves of their victims, and not a single voice to whisper hope to man.

The Fa-
ther's re-
sponse — a
new world
free from
oppression.

He stands there (the angel), his hand trembling with the human guilt. But hark! The voice of Jehovah speaks out from the awful cloud: Let there be light again. Let there be a new world. Tell my people, the poor, downtrodden millions, to go out from

the old world. Tell them to go out from wrong, oppression, and blood. Tell them to go out from the old world to build up my altar in the new.

As God lives, my friends, I believe that to be his voice. Yes, were my soul trembling on the wing of eternity, were this hand freezing to death, were my voice choking with the last struggle, I would still, with the last gasp of that voice, implore you to remember the truth. God has given America to be free. Yes, as I sank down into the gloomy shadows of the grave, with my last gasp I would beg you to sign that parchment. In the name of the One who made you, the Saviour who redeemed you, in the name of the millions whose very breath is now hushed, as, in intense expectation, they look up to you for the awful words, **YOU ARE FREE!**

God has given America to be free.

MOTTO ON LIBERTY BELL.

Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof. Leviticus xxv. 10.¹ The motto.

¹ One of the most interesting relics of colonial and Revolutionary times is Liberty Bell. It is of particular interest, not only because of the motto inscribed upon it, which itself seemed both providential and prophetic, but because its history is so intimately associated with the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the formation of the Constitution of the United States, and the enunciation and development of those principles which have made this nation great.

The bell was ordered made, by a resolution passed by the Pennsylvania Assembly of 1750-51, for the Pennsylvania State House, at Philadelphia, later known as Independence Hall. The order for the casting of the bell was first given to a firm in England. The bell made, however, was not satisfactory, and it was broken up, and, with some added metals, recast by the firm of Pass and Stow, of Philadelphia. This, again, did not prove satisfactory, and the same firm cast it over a second time. This last effort was more successful, and produced the bell which announced to the people on the evening of July 4, 1776, the fact that the motion to adopt the Declaration of Independence had passed the Assembly.

History of Liberty Bell.

Cast three times.

A point worthy of note is the fact that each time the bell was cast, there were inscribed upon it the words: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof. Lev. xxv. 10."

Same motto.