

# ADDRESS

AT THE

#  
C

## UNVEILING OF THE STATUE

OF

# DANIEL WEBSTER

IN THE CENTRAL PARK, NEW YORK,

25 NOVEMBER, 1876.

BY

ROBERT C. WINTHROP.

BOSTON:

PRESS OF JOHN WILSON AND SON.

1876.

## ADDRESS.

---

I AM here, Mr. Mayor, fellow-countrymen and friends, with no purpose of trespassing very long on your attention. I am afraid that I have neither voice nor strength, to-day, for many words in the open air; and I may be obliged to leave for the newspapers much of what I might desire to say.

But, indeed, the Address of this occasion has been made. It has been made by one to whom it was most appropriately assigned, and who had every title and every talent for making it. It was peculiarly fit that this grand gift to your magnificent Park should be acknowledged and welcomed by a citizen of New York,—one of whom you are all justly proud, an eminent advocate and jurist, a distinguished statesman and public speaker, with the laurels of the Centennial Oration at Philadelphia still fresh on his brow. The utterances of this hour might well have ended with him.

But I could not find it in my heart to refuse altogether the repeated and urgent request of your munificent fellow-citizen, Mr. Burnham, that I would be here on the platform with Mr. Evarts and himself, to-day, to witness the unveiling of this noble Statue, and to add a few words in commemoration of him whom it so vividly and so impressively portrays.

Mr. Burnham has done me the honor to call me to his assistance on this occasion, as one who had enjoyed some peculiar opportunities for knowing the illustrious statesman to whose

memory he is paying these large and sumptuous honors. And it is true, my friends, that my personal associations with Mr. Webster reach back to a distant day. I recall him as a familiar visitor in the homes of more than one of those with whom I was most nearly connected, when I was but a schoolboy, on his first removal to Boston, in 1817. I recall the deep impressions produced on all who heard him, and communicated to all who did not hear him, by his great efforts in the Constitutional Convention of Massachusetts, and, soon afterwards, by his noble discourse at Plymouth Rock, in 1820. I was myself in the crowd which gazed at him, and listened to him with admiration, when he laid the corner-stone of the Monument on Bunker Hill, in presence of Lafayette, in 1824. I was myself in the throng which hung with rapture on his lips as he pronounced that splendid eulogy on Adams and Jefferson, in Faneuil Hall, in 1826. Entering his office as a Law-Student, in 1828, I was under his personal tuition during three of the busiest and proudest years of his life. From 1840 to 1850 I was associated with him in the Congress of the United States; and I may be pardoned for not forgetting that it was then my privilege and my pride to succeed him in the Senate, when he was last called into the Cabinet, as Secretary of State, by President Fillmore.

I have thus no excuse, my friends, for not knowing something, for not knowing much, of Daniel Webster. Of those who knew him longer or better than I did, few, certainly, remain among the living; and I could hardly have reconciled it with what is due to his memory, or with what is due to my own position, if I had refused, — I will not say, to bear testimony to his wonderful powers and his great public services; for all such testimony would be as superfluous as to bear testimony to the light of the sun in the skies above us, — but if I had declined to give expression to the gratification and delight with which the Sons of New England, and the Sons of Massachusetts and

of Boston especially, and I as one of them, cannot fail to regard this most signal commemoration of one, whose name and fame were so long and so peculiarly dear to them.

Neither Mr. Evarts nor I have come here to-day, my friends, to hold up Mr. Webster, — much as we may have admired or loved him, — as one with whom we have always agreed, as one whose course we have uniformly approved, or in whose career we have seen nothing to regret. Our testimony is all the more trustworthy, — my own certainly is, — that we have sometimes differed from him. But we are here to recognize him as one of the greatest men our country has ever produced; as one of the grandest figures in our whole national history; as one who, for intellectual power, had no superior, and hardly an equal, in our own land or in any other land, during his day and generation; as one whose written and spoken words, so fitly embalmed “for a life beyond life” in the six noble volumes edited by Edward Everett, are among the choicest treasures of our language and literature; and, still more and above all, as one who rendered inestimable services to his country, — at one period, vindicating its rights and preserving its peace with foreign nations by the most skilful and masterly diplomacy; at another period, rescuing its Constitution from overthrow, and repelling triumphantly the assaults of nullification and disunion, by overpowering argument and matchless eloquence.

Mr. Webster made many marvellous manifestations of himself in his busy life of threescore years and ten. Convincing arguments in the Courts of Law, brilliant appeals to popular assemblies, triumphant speeches in the Halls of Legislation, magnificent orations and discourses of commemoration or ceremony, — are thickly scattered along his whole career. I rejoice to remember how many of them I have heard from his own lips, and how much inspiration and instruction I have derived from them. To have seen and heard him on one of



his field-days, was a privilege which no one will undervalue who ever enjoyed it. There was a power, a breadth, a beauty, a perfection, in some of his efforts, when he was at his best, which distanced all approach, and rendered rivalry ridiculous.

And if the style and tone and temper of our political discussions are to be once more elevated, refined, and purified, — and we all know how much room there is for elevation and refinement, — we must go back for our examples and models at least as far as the days of that great Senatorial Triumvirate, — Clay, Calhoun, and Webster. There were giants in those days ; but none of them forgot that, though “it is excellent to have a giant’s strength, it is tyrannous to use it like a giant.”

Among those who have been celebrated as orators or public speakers, in our own day or in other days, there have been many diversities of gifts and many diversities of operations. There have been those who were listened to wholly for their intellectual qualities, for the wit or the wisdom, the learning or the philosophy, which characterized their efforts. There have been those whose main attraction was a curious felicity and facility of illustration and description, adorned by the richest gems which could be gathered by historical research or classical study. There have been those to whom the charms of manner and the graces of elocution and the melody of voice were the all-sufficient recommendations to attention and applause. And there have been those who owed their success more to opportunity and occasion, to some stirring theme or some exciting emergency, than to any peculiar attributes of their own. But Webster combined every thing. No thoughts more profound and weighty. No style more terse and telling. No illustrations more vivid and clear-cut. No occasions more august and momentous. No voice more deep and thrilling. No manner more impressive and admirable. No presence so grand and majestic, as his.

That great brain of his, as I have seen it working, whether in public debate or in private converse, seemed to me often like some mighty machine, — always ready for action, and almost always in action, evolving much material from its own resources and researches, and eagerly appropriating and assimilating whatever was brought within its reach, producing and reproducing the richest fabrics with the ease and certainty, the precision and the condensing energy, of a perfect Corliss engine, — such an one as many of us have just seen presiding so magically and so majestically over the Exposition at Philadelphia.

And he put his own crown-stamp on almost every thing he uttered. There was no mistaking one of Webster's great efforts. There is no mistaking them now. They will be distinguished, in all time to come, like pieces of old gold or silver plate, by an unmistakable mint-mark. He knew, like the casters or forgers of yonder Statue, not only how to pour forth burning words and blazing thoughts, but so to blend and fuse and weld together his facts and figures, his illustrations and arguments, his metaphors and subject matter, as to bring them all out at last into one massive and enduring image of his own great mind!

He was by no means wanting in labor and study; and he often anticipated the earliest dawn in his preparations for an immediate effort. I remember how humorously he told me once, that the cocks in his own yard often mistook his morning candle for the break of day, and began to crow lustily as he entered his office, though it were two hours before sunrise. Yet he frequently did wonderful things off-hand; and one might often say of him, in the words of an old poet, —

“ His noble negligences teach  
What others' toils despair to reach.”

Not in our own land only, Mr. Mayor and fellow-countrymen, were the pre-eminent powers of Mr. Webster recognized

and appreciated. Brougham, and Lyndhurst, and the late Lord Derby, as I had abundant opportunity of knowing, were no underraters of his intellectual grasp and grandeur. I remember well, too, the casual testimony of a venerable prelate of the English Church, — the late Dr. Harcourt, then Archbishop of York, — who said to me, thirty years ago, in London, “I met your wonderful friend, Mr. Webster, for only five minutes; but in those five minutes I learned more of American institutions, and of the peculiar working of the American Constitution, than in all that I had ever heard or read from any or all other sources.”

Of his Discourse on the Second Centennial Anniversary of the Landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock, John Adams wrote, in acknowledging a copy of it, “Mr. Burke is no longer entitled to the praise of being the most consummate orator of modern times.” And, certainly, from the date of that Discourse, he stood second, as an Orator, to no one who spoke the English language. But it is peculiarly and pre-eminently as the Expounder and Defender of the Constitution of the United States, in January, 1830, that he will be remembered and honored as long as that Constitution shall hold a place in the American heart, or a place on the pages of the world’s history.

Mr. Webster once said, — and perhaps more than once, — that there was not an article, a section, a clause, a phrase, a word, a syllable, or even a comma, of that Constitution, which he had not studied and pondered in every relation and in every construction of which it was susceptible.

Born at the commencement of the year 1782, at the very moment when the necessity of such an Instrument for preserving our Union, and making us a Nation, was first beginning to be comprehended and felt by the patriots who had achieved our Independence, — just as they had fully discovered the utter insufficiency of the old Confederation, and how mere a rope



of sand it was ; born in that very year in which the Legislature of your own State of New York, under the lead of your gallant Philip Schuyler, at the prompting of your grand Alexander Hamilton, was adopting the very first resolutions passed by any State in favor of such an Instrument, — it might almost be said that the natal air of the Constitution was his own natal air. He drank in its spirit with his earliest breath, and seemed born to comprehend, expound, and defend it. No Roman schoolboy ever committed to memory the laws of the Twelve Tables more diligently and thoroughly than did he the Constitution of his country. He had it by heart in more senses of the words than one, and every part and particle of it seemed only less precious and sacred to him than his Bible.

John Adams himself was not more truly the Colossus of Independence in the Continental Congress of 1776, than Daniel Webster was the Colossus of the Constitution and the Union in the Federal Congress of 1830.

For other speeches, of other men, it might perhaps be claimed that they have had the power to inflame and precipitate war, — foreign war, or civil war. Of Webster's great speech, as a Senator of Massachusetts, in 1830, — and of that alone, I think, — it can be said, that it averted and postponed Civil War for a whole generation. Yes, it repressed the irrepressible conflict itself for thirty years ! And when that dire calamity came upon us at last, though the voice of the master had so long been hushed, that speech still supplied the most convincing arguments and the most inspiring incitements for a resolute defence of the Union. It is not yet exhausted. There is argument and inspiration enough in it still, if only they be heeded, to carry us along, as a United People, at least for another Century. In that Speech "he still lives ;" and lives for the Constitution and the Union of his Country.

Why, my friends, not even the Dynamite and Rend-rock



and Vulcan powder of your scientific and gallant Newton were more effective in blasting and shattering your Hell-Gate reef, and opening the way for the safe navigation of yonder Bay, than that speech of Webster was in exploding the doctrines of nullification, and clearing the channel for our Ship of State to sail on, safely, prosperously, triumphantly, whether in sunshine or in storm!

Beyond all comparison, it was *the Speech* of our Constitutional Age. "*Nil simile aut secundum.*" It was James Madison, of Virginia, himself, who said of it in a letter at the time: "It crushes nullification, and must hasten an abandonment of secession." Whatever remained to be done, in the progress of events, for the repression of menacing designs or of overt acts, was grandly done by the resolute patriotism and iron will of President Jackson, whose proclamation and policy, to that end, Mr. Webster sustained with all his might. They were the legitimate conclusions of his own great Argument.

Of other and later efforts of Mr. Webster, I have neither time nor inclination to speak. There are too many coals still burning beneath the smouldering embers of some of his more recent controversies, for any one to rake them rashly open on such an occasion as this. I was by no means in full accord with his memorable 7th of March speech, and my views of it to-day are precisely what he knew they were in 1850. But no differences of opinion on that day, or on any other day, ever impaired my admiration of his powers, my confidence in his patriotism, my earnest wishes for his promotion, nor the full assurance which I felt that he would administer the Government with perfect integrity, as well as with consummate ability. What a President he would have made for a Centennial year! What a tower of strength he would have been, to our Constitution and our Country, in all the perplexities and perils through which we have recently passed, and are still passing! "Oh! for an hour of Dundee"!

No one will pretend that he was free from all infirmities of character and conduct, though they have often been grossly exaggerated. Great temptations proverbially beset the pathway of great powers; and one who can overcome almost every thing else, may sometimes fail of conquering himself. He never assumed to be faultless; and he would have indignantly rebuked any one who assumed it for him. We all know that, while he could master the great questions of National Finance, and was never weary in maintaining the importance of upholding the National Credit, he never cared quite enough about his own finances, or took particular pains to preserve his own personal credit. We all know that he was sometimes impatient of differences, and sometimes arrogant and overbearing towards opponents. His own consciousness of surpassing powers, and the flatteries,—I had almost said, the idolatries,—of innumerable friends, would account for much more of all this than he ever displayed. I have known him in all his moods. I have experienced the pain of his frown, as well as the charms of his favor. And I will acknowledge that I had rather confront him as he is here, to-day, in bronze, than encounter his opposition in the flesh. His antagonism was tremendous. “Safest he who stood aloof.” But his better nature always asserted itself in the end. No man or woman or child could be more tender and affectionate.

And there is one element of his character which must never be forgotten. I mean his deep religious faith and trust. I recall the delight with which he often conversed on the Bible. I recall the delight with which he dwelt on that exquisite prayer of one of the old Prophets, repeating it fervently as a model of eloquence and of devotion: “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd

in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." I recall his impressive and powerful plea for the Religious Instruction of the Young, in the memorable case of Girard College. I have been with him on the most solemn occasions, in Boston and at Washington, in the midst of the most exciting and painful controversies, kneeling by his side at the table of our common Master, and witnessing the humility and reverence of his worship. And who has forgotten those last words which he ordered to be inscribed, and which are inscribed, on his tombstone at Marshfield:—

"‘Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.’ Philosophical Argument, especially that drawn from the vastness of the universe, in comparison with the apparent insignificance of this globe, has sometimes shaken my reason for the faith which is in me; but my heart has always assured and re-assured me that the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be a Divine Reality. The Sermon on the Mount cannot be a merely human production. This belief enters into the very depth of my conscience. The whole history of man proves it. — DANIEL WEBSTER."

I cannot help wishing that this declaration, in all its original fulness, were engraved on one of the sides of yonder monumental base, in letters which all the world might read. Amid all the perplexities which modern Science, intentionally or unintentionally, is multiplying and magnifying around us, what consolation and strength must ever be found in such an expression of faith from that surpassing intellect!

I congratulate you, my friends, that your Park is to be permanently adorned with this grand figure, and that the inscription on its massive pedestal is to associate it for ever with the great principle of "Union and Liberty, one and inseparable." Nor can I conclude without saying, that, from all I have ever known of Mr. Webster's feelings, nothing could have gratified him so much as that, in this Centennial Year, on this memorable



Anniversary, nearly a quarter of a century after he had gone to his rest, — when all the partialities and prejudices, all the love and the hate, which wait upon the career of living public men, should have grown cold or passed away, — a Statue of himself should be set up here, within the limits of your magnificent City, and amid these superb surroundings. Quite apart from those personal and domestic ties which rendered New York so dear to him, — of which we have a touching reminder in the presence of the venerable lady who was so long the sharer of his name and the ornament of his home, — quite apart from all such considerations, he would have appreciated such a tribute, as this, I think, above all other posthumous honors.

There was something congenial to him in the grandeur of this great Commercial Metropolis. He loved, indeed, the hills and plains of New Hampshire, among which he was born. He delighted in Marshfield and the shores of Plymouth, where he was buried. He was warmly attached to Boston and the people of Massachusetts, among whom he had lived so long, and from whom he had so often received his commissions as their Representative and their Senator in Congress. But in your noble City, as he said, he recognized “the commercial capital, not only of the United States, but of the whole continent from the pole to the South Sea.” “The growth of this City,” said he, “and the Constitution of the United States are coevals and contemporaries.” “New York herself,” he exclaimed, “is the noblest eulogy on the Union of the States.” He delighted to remember that here Washington was first inaugurated as President, and that here had been the abode of Hamilton and John Jay and Rufus King. And it was at a banquet, given to him, at your own Niblo’s Garden in 1837, and under the inspiration of these associations, that he summed up the whole lesson of the past and the whole duty of the future, and condensed them into a sentiment, which has ever since entered into the

circulating medium of true patriotism, like an ingot of gold with the impress of the eagle: "One Country, One Constitution, One Destiny."

Let that motto, still and ever, be the watchword of the hour, and whatever momentary perplexities or perils may environ us, with the blessing of God, no permanent harm can happen to our Republic.

In behalf of my fellow-citizens of New England, I thank Mr. Burnham for this great gift to your Central Park; and I congratulate him on having associated his name with so splendid a tribute to so illustrious a man. A New Englander himself, he long ago decorated one of the chief Cities of his native State with a noble Statue of a venerated father of the Church to which he belongs.\* He has now adorned the City of his residence with this grand figure of a pre-eminent American Statesman. He has thus doubly secured for himself the grateful remembrance of all by whom Religion and Patriotism, Churchmanship and Statesmanship, shall be held worthy of commemoration and honor, in all time to come.

---

\* A bronze Statue of the Rt. Rev. Thomas Church Brownell, D.D., — for more than forty years the Bishop of Connecticut, and, at his death, in 1865, the presiding Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, — was presented to Trinity College, Hartford, of which he was the Founder, by his Son-in-law, Mr. Burnham, and was unveiled in the College Grounds, on the 11th of November, 1869.