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I N D E P E N D E N C E

O F T H E

United States of America,

Delivered on the 4th of July, 1787.

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By the Rev. ROBERT DAVIDSON, D. D.  
Pastor of the Presbyterian Congregation  
in Carlisle, and Professor of History and  
Belles Lettres, in Dickinson College.

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C A R L I S L E :  
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On Thursday the 5th of July, the following short ADDRESS was presented to the Rev. Dr. ROBERT DAVIDSON.

**A**S a Committee appointed by a number of the principal Inhabitants of Carlisle and its vicinity, we wait on you, Sir, to signify their and our high satisfaction on hearing your patriotic and animated Oration delivered yesterday.

We consider that the publication will be of general utility, by impressing the minds of the public with many important truths essential to their political welfare; and therefore request a copy for that purpose.

We are, Rev. Sir,

Your affectionate friends

And servants,

JOHN MONTGOMERY  
SAM. POSTLETHWAIT  
JAMES POLLOCK  
JOHN AGNEW  
ROBERT MAGAW  
SAM. A. M'USKRY  
ALEX. M'KEEHAN.

The Rev. ROBERT DAVIDSON, D.D.

Carlisle, 5th July, 1787.

**T**H E Doctor, in reply, thanked the Gentlemen for their politeness and the flattering terms in which they were pleased to speak of his performance, and assured them that he received great pleasure in having contributed to render the fourth of July agreeable to his friends. He considered himself very highly rewarded for any pains he had taken; and wished his address, which was the work of a few days, were more fit for the public eye.— As, however, his fellow-citizens, in whose judgment he could confide, wished it to be published, in hopes of its being useful; and as he was confident it contained no sentiments but what were true and just, and no encomiums but such as were fully merited; and being ever willing to throw in his mite to serve the cause of liberty and his country;—he therefore consented to furnish the printers with a copy.

**ORATION**

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## O R A T I O N, &c.

His hearers being seated under a very agreeable bower,---consisting of a brilliant circle of patriotic ladies, and a number of gentlemen---no small part of whom had signalized themselves during the late war as Generals, Colonels, Majors, &c. and the Officers of the Light Infantry Company, and of the Troop of Light Horse, with a number of the gentlemen who compose those companies being also present---He arose, and thus addressed them---

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**W**E are happy in seeing each other and meet, in this pleasant retreat, on the first day of a new year.--- You all understand me to mean the twelfth of our INDEPENDENCE.

On the memorable fourth of July, in the year seventeen hundred and seventy-six, did the Honorable Congress, composed of delegates from thirteen commonwealths, make the solemn Declaration,--- that, in dependence on Heaven alone, they would thenceforth bear the name, and maintain the rights, of sovereign, free, and independent States.

And

And perhaps no people that ever existed, in ancient or modern times, have had more reason than we have, to remember with gratitude the day that gave us birth as a nation, and the great events which led us on to an independent state.

As then we have devoted this day, as in former years, to expressions of joy; and as the observance of this as the first day of every American year, may, by the blessing of God, be one happy mean of cherishing a spirit of liberty, together with a spirit of gratitude and piety; you will please to favour me with your attention, a few minutes, while I endeavour to call to our remembrance some of the great things which God hath done for us; and also briefly point out the manner in which it is our duty to improve the blessings of Heaven, in order to our stability, happiness, and glory, as a nation.

I promise to mention nothing but what I consider as highly interesting; and beg for no longer time, than what is necessary, to do justice in a small degree, to so important a subject.

I shall, however, in the first place, take the liberty of addressing a few sentences, to those gentlemen who have been, or at present are, in the military line.

The martial appearance which strikes the eye on this occasion, is highly pleasing. The sound too of the drum and the trumpet, which we have heard, has its use, as it calls to our remembrance the days of our warfare happily ended.

Your present conduct, gentlemen, and the recollection of former services, give

us sufficient reason to hope, that you will on every occasion show yourselves the firm supporters of that freedom, for which you have so nobly contended, and to purchase which so many thousands of our brethren have fallen a sacrifice.

There are present, those who have been, more than once, in the most trying situations, who have beheld the storm, both when it was collecting, at a distance, and when it had assumed its most awful forms; and who have marched through showers of the winged instruments of death, to obtain victory.---You fought,---not to make yourselves rich and independent by enslaving others;---but, to make millions free, and to enjoy the blessings of freedom in common with those, for whom you risked life and all that was dear to you. Your conduct has fully evinced, that you were actuated by the most worthy motives, -- an ardent zeal for liberty, and love to mankind.

There are also many present, who have never yet had an opportunity of displaying their valour in the field, but who are heartily zealous in their country's cause, and, if called to action, would stand forth as an undaunted band of brothers, to oppose every enemy of our peace and freedom.

To you, gentlemen, who have the honour to command the companies, we have this day seen, and to all others who act a similar part, great praise is due, for so much attention to discipline, and that noble and martial appearance which you all make.

Young

Young soldiers! many of you perhaps are yet but learning the military terms and movements; and some may be ready to imagine, that because the great contest is over, these exercises may be little more than parade. Believe it, however, the day may come, when you may be called to serious action.----So much uncertainty is there in all human affairs! Some of you may even rise, by superior merit, to the highest offices; and much may depend on your virtue, prowess, and patriotic spirit.---Prepare, then, in time, for scenes like these.---Many shining examples have been set before you.-----Be it your ambition to copy them.

Having marked with an anxious mind the progress of the late war, from its rise to its happy conclusion; and wishing on this day to call into view, not only those events which once alarmed all our fears, but also, and more especially, those which gave us inexpressible joy, and prepared the way for an honourable peace; ---I scarcely know where to begin, or what facts more especially to notice, where all are so important, and so interesting.

What has once made a deep impression on the mind is not soon forgotten :---- And O! how various and engaging are the objects and the scenes that now present themselves before me!

I see orators, warmed with the love of their country, rising up before their anxious fellow-citizens, to enlighten them with just notions of liberty, and rouse them to vigorous exertions. I hear their animated speeches, while the listening and delighted multitudes hang upon their  
their

their lips, and at the close of each address, exclaim,--“ He hath spoken well ; Britain designs to oppress us ; she is preparing chains for us, her distant and suspected, but most dutiful sons ; we cannot submit ; we will be free.”

How the flame spreads from north to south, and from the ocean to the western waters ! Men are chosen in every place, in whom the people can confide ; men eminent for their abilities, and of known integrity and public spirit. They assemble ;---they deliberate ;---they consider in their proper light the oppressive acts of a British legislature ; and they resolve to prepare for battle, rather than be degraded from the rank of freemen.

But like dutiful children, they first present their loyal addresses and joint petitions to the throne ; hoping that the voice of reason and justice will yet be heard, and earnestly beseeching the Monarch of the British isles, to view us in the same favourable light with his other faithful subjects. But prayers, and the most sincere professions of loyalty, avail not. The blinded rulers of a nation, confident in arms, and assured of victory, will not allow the truth to reach the royal ear, but advise the enacting of laws and prosecution of measures, which soon lead to open war, and eternal separation.

O the anxiety that now takes possession of the minds of my countrymen!---What zeal ! what unanimity ! what desire to learn the art of war ! not for its own sake, but that they may be in a condition to meet their hostile brethren in the field. What ardent cries to Heaven for assistance !

Days



Days of humiliation and prayer are appointed. Addresses, even from the pulpit, inspire the people with the highest confidence in the justice of their cause.----- Frugal modes of living are adopted, and industry most earnestly recommended.

Even the daughters of America, actuated by the same spirit, and speaking the same language, as their beloved husbands and brothers, resolve to share their fate, whatever that may be;----they encourage them to go forth to battle;-----undertake the management of their farms and other business, in their absence;-----raise large sums of money among themselves and prepare garments for suffering soldiers;---and deny themselves many things, the produce of foreign climes, which custom had taught them to consider as part of the necessaries of life.----- Such was the conduct of the patriotic daughters of America! and let their names be mentioned with honour, and their praises descend, with the stream of time, to latest ages.

See the sons of farmers, many of them not yet arrived at the years or stature of men, bidding adieu to their fields, their friends, & all the pleasures of a rural life; the scholar throwing aside his books, from which he was extracting the essence of wisdom; the merchant abandoning a gainful traffic; and even the preacher, leaving his pulpit, with his bible in one hand, and his sword in the other;----all marching forth to oppose the foe, and maintain their dearest rights!

With what alacrity were the counsels of our Congress and committees followed.

ed! With what wisdom were those counsels given! They had the force of laws; and it was next to treason, not to do what those fathers of America advised. What zeal, what harmony, in the most arduous undertaking! Every friend of his country embraced another of the same spirit, wherever he saw him, and from whatever part of the land he came;--strangers to national or party distinctions! Many were the illustrious com-patriots who stood forth in that trying day, to employ their several talents for their country's good. To tell their names,---to specify their merits,----to describe their toils, their sufferings, and their gallant deeds,--would be to compose a history, instead of delivering a short oration. While some remain in the senate-house, to devise plans of union and the best means of defence;---to compose addresses and deliver speeches, in which the noblest sentiments are clothed in the sublimest diction;---and to frame laws and constitutions, founded on the sure basis of natural right;---lo! others, raised to command by the voice of their countrymen, march forth at the head of troops, hastily collected from different states, and strangers as yet to military duties and the perils war,---to oppose generals, whose fame was great among the nations, and armies, perfect in discipline, and accustomed to scenes of danger.

As the giant of old disdain'd the ruddy youth, who came against him, in the name of the Lord, with a stone and a sling; and said to him, "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls

of the air, and unto the beasts of the field;" so did British chiefs, confiding in their troops, often tried and not seldom victorious, contemn the youthful and inexperienced bands that first opposed them.

How mortifying, then, must have been their disappointment!

Let old commanders, trusting to numbers and experience, boast of their fancied superiority, and promise to their royal master, that the timid sons of the western world shall soon be humbled in the dust by British arms; and that, with a few thousand men, they could march from one end of the continent to the other, and bring those, whom they were pleased to stile rebels, to unconditional submission, by the terror of their name; little did they know, what great things a whole nation, properly enlightened, determined to be free, and confiding in the arm of omnipotence, could soon accomplish.

But who shall lead forth our armies as chief in command, and animate them to deeds of glory by his own example?----- Where is the man to be found, whose valour has been proved, and whose spirit shall remain unbroken, amidst the severest trials of human virtue and human patience? Say, ye freemen, ye patriots, ye sages of America,--is there a man among you, in whom you can all confide, whom all shall delight to honour, and under whom your armies shall encamp, or march, or fight, without a murmur, whether exposed to the ardent blaze of a summer's sun, or to the snows and chilling blasts of a winter's sky?

Yes,

Yes, there is one, (the millions of America reply,) there is one, in whom we can all confide, raised up by providence to be a chief instrument, in effecting a most important revolution,---whose brow the unfading laurel shall adorn.

The grand council of America, as if moved by some heavenly impulse, unanimously appoint to the command of their armies the only man, I will not say, in America, but in the world, to whom it was best that command should be given.

And when he went forth to run his glorious race, these eyes beheld him surrounded by admiring thousands, who, as with one voice, called down the blessings of Heaven upon his head, and anticipated, in joyful hope, the victories that were to follow.

To dwell, my fellow-citizens, on the praises of this great and good man, on this day, would be a proper and pleasing exercise: not as if to court the favour of the great by the language of adulation; but that we might feel as we ought our obligations to Providence, for raising up, and preserving so long for his country's good, so great a deliverer.

Think not, ye brave Generals and others who under the Commander in Chief nobly acted your several parts, and without whose exertions even a WASHINGTON could not have conquered,---think not, I pray, that it is for want of gratitude, your names are not mentioned at this time, together with that of America's most highly favoured son. Were I to attempt to give the names of all those, whom the pen of the faithful historian shall hand down  
down

down with honour to posterity, neither my time nor abilities would be equal to the task. And to mention some, while many others of equal merit were passed over in silence, would be an act of injustice.

After many signal battles had been fought, on this great theatre, extending from Quebec to Florida and from the ocean to the wilderness, (many of whose savage tribes were also let loose upon us); after a generous and brave nation, with a most amiable monarch at their head, LOUIS the benevolent, had taken us by the hand, and aided us with their fleets and armies; after the malicious attempts of a few internal foes and traitors were disappointed, and every state had felt less or more the ravages of war; and after Britain had tried her strength on every quarter, and some of her best generals with their entire armies had fallen into our hands;----then was the important æra hastened on, when peace should once more bless our land; and our independence be acknowledged by the powers of Europe.

It hath pleased the great Disposer of events, that the contest should end, in an entire separation of these states from what was called the parent nation. The means and events by which this was accomplished, were so many and wonderful, that all were constrained to cry out, "Surely that Heaven, whose aid we have implored, is on our side!" To HIM, then, who hath done great things for us, let us, on this day, and every day, offer a tribute of sincere praise. And while we are cheerful and happy, remembering the Giver of all good, let us be devout and thankful.

I have but a few words more to say; and as you have been so very indulgent, I cannot but hope you will hear me patiently a few minutes longer.

My fellow-citizens,

Let us not leave the great work, which we have begun, unfinished. Much indeed has been done;---but we may be assured, much yet remains for us to do, before we can be, in all respects, that flourishing, great, and happy nation, which we wish and hope to be.

Exertions are necessary to be made, in order that the debt of the nation may be honourably discharged, and those who fought our battles rewarded, as justice demands.

A spirit of piety and genuine christianity should be more generally diffused among all ranks of men, (for which end, seminaries of learning should be generously encouraged,) and the greatest and best of beings adored and loved, as he requires, for the many civil and religious privileges that we enjoy.

Righteousness and piety exalt a nation.

A spirit of industry, frugality, and temperance, more generally prevailing, would be an inexhaustible mine of wealth to the inhabitants of this land.

A spirit of union, confidence, and brotherly love, ought also to be cherished by every true patriot.

Our character and consequence, as a people, depend on the firm union of these States, now called United.

If you would allow me a bold comparison, I would say, that these American  
States

**States should resemble the Solar System, where every obedient planet moves on in its proper path,---never seeking to fly from, nor ever approaching nearer to, the great attractive central orb, than the wise author of nature intended.**

The bonds of our union, in the opinion of many, must be drawn much closer; and the machine in a great measure wound up anew, in order that it may perform its operations with new vigour.

And now is the important moment come, for this great work;---now, when the most enlightened patriots from every state are convened in our metropolis, to deliberate on these weighty matters.

Illustrious assembly! may the wisdom of Heaven direct you. May your prayers, and the prayers of the millions whom you represent, be addressed to the Father of lights, for his direction and blessing at this most important crisis!-----He, who led your armies to victory, by his valour, now presides over you, to assist your counsels, by his wisdom. Avoid extremes.---Pursue a middle course.---Let not the bond of our union be, a rope of sand; & Oh! let it also bear as little resemblance as possible to the heavy chain of despotism.-----Let that liberty, which alone is worth contending for, and which lies equally remote from licentiousness and tyranny, be ever kept steadily in view. Let every state be wise and just. And let none imagine, that any thing less than destruction must be the consequence, of want of faith, piety, and union.

May

May God bless these States, and make us long a wise, flourishing, and happy people! And may he grant, that this year, on which we have now entered, may be one of the most memorable in the annals of America!

F I N I S.