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AN

ADDRESS,

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TO THE

YOUNG MEN

OF

CHESHIRE,

DELIVERED JULY 4, 1808.

—●—
BY JOHN LELAND.
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AN ADDRESS,

TO THE YOUNG MEN OF CHESHIRE.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN,

IN the celebration of this our National Birth-Day, it has become fashionable for the fathers and assistants of the Revolution to take their seats, and for some young genius (who has learned the grand events which took place in the cabinet and field of battle, during the struggle, from history alone) to eulogize those warriors and statesmen, who won immortal glory for themselves, in gaining the Liberty and Independence of these United States.

But the scene is reversed to-day. The young patriots of *Cheshire*, glowing with the ardor of '76; tenacious to secure the political interest which their fathers have left them; have invited a senior citizen to address them on this day.

I was 21 years old between the battles of *Lexington* and *Bunker's Hill*, and have noticed the various changes that have emerged since that period; changes that have often filled me with astonishment.

It will not be denied by any attentive observer, that our most signal deliverances have been preceded by the most dark and palpable clouds. Witness the defeat of *Burgoyne*—the capture of the *Hessians* at *Trenton*, and many similar events in the *Carolina's*,
during

during the revolutionary war. To which may be added, the remarkable triumph of principles at the close of the last century.

These remarkable interpositions of divine providence in behalf of America, at times the most critical, inspire us with a belief, that the Almighty has a peculiar regard for America, and that the American Revolution was one of those prominent events, marked out in prophecy and providence, which leads on to the downfall of tyranny in the world. In this view of the subject, our confidence continues, that He who has saved us in six, will also save us in seven troubles.

The present distress of the United States may be defined thus :—The French nation, like a monstrous beast, with a notable horn between its eyes, has pushed its conquest over all the continent of Europe.

The British government, like the beast rising out of the sea, with an immense navy, claims the exclusive right to all the watry world. In order to cripple each other, the French *horn* has blockaded all the ports of Europe, that he has the control of, from the entrance of British ships, or any other ships which shall touch at an English port. Ships and vessels, therefore, of either of these descriptions, become legal prizes to the French.

The British *lion*, by orders of council, has likewise blockaded all the French ports, and declared all vessels bound to, or coming from such ports, if taken, to be legal prizes to themselves. Each of these belligerents seem to doubt the moral justice of the measure, but justifies itself, by casting the *cause* on the other.

In this contest, between those two great powers, the chiefest of the commerce of the United States is in fact confiscated, and the remainder every way insecure.

cure. Hence immense stores of produce are on hand for want of market, and money thereby, to a considerable degree, out of circulation.

As our revenue has principally arisen from impost, the debt of the nation (which for several years past has been rapidly diminishing) will moderate, if not entirely stop, in decrease.

Individuals who have made purchases and contracted debts, cannot meet their engagements, because they cannot sell their produce ; and abundance of the Europeans and West-Indians are in a state of hunger, bordering upon starvation, for want thereof.—Some lay all the blame upon the French blockading decrees—some on the orders of the British council—and others cast the whole on our own government.

The French and British both take our vessels and cargoes at pleasure, and judge, by their own courts, whether they be legal prizes or not ; and the British have, more than once, come into our bays and murdered our citizens ; and have this minute (except they are dead) more than 4000 of our American born seamen pressed aboard their hostile ships.

For these outrages, the President interdicted the entrance of any of the British ships into our waters, which has since been followed by an *Embargo*, which operates alike towards both the belligerents.

From this brief sketch, *three* queries arise, *viz.*

First. What have the United States done ?

Second. What can they do ?

Third. What is best to be done ?

First. What have the United States done ?—Have they failed in any of their treaty engagements ?—Have they authorized any outrage committed by their citizens

zens abroad?—Or have they been unfriendly to the citizens or subjects of other powers, when driven into our ports by distress?—None of these things are they accused of by France or Britain. What then have they done?—Their only crime, in the view of France is, that they will not join *Napoleon* to crush *George*: And their crime in the eyes of Britain is, that they will not unite with *George* to check the career of *Napoleon*.

The United States have withdrawn from the ocean, until the murder and captivity of our citizens can be expiated—treaties regarded—and neutral vessels and cargoes be secured to the owners. But,

Secondly. What can the United States do?

They cannot make another world, nor can they conquer the world that is made. They are no ways equal to the French, by land; nor have they any navy to contend with Britain about the government of the seas.

There is no danger that Bonaparte will ever send an army here, as long as he is at war with Britain; and Burgoyne and Cornwallis will read lectures to the British, to keep their own side of the Atlantic.—Should a war, however, break out with Britain, the United States, humanly speaking, can take from them the *Canada's* and *Novascotia*.

But, what can the United States do?

They can live independent. Including a vast territory of fertile land, abounding with all the natural materials of life, interspersed with lakes, bays, and navigable streams for internal commerce—inhabited by a hardy race of men and women, who have been taught to labor from the cradle, they need not go abroad for joy.

Should a portion of the people, equal to those who follow

follow the seas to foreign ports, with others who could be spared from Agriculture, turn their attention to Manufactures, the people would soon be supplied with all the *necessaries* of life, and (with the rich acquisition of *Louisiana*) with nearly all the *luxuries* of the world.

If individuals could not be found, who are sufficient capitalists for the more expensive manufactories, associations could be easily formed to remove all objections that might arise from that quarter.

One thing is certain ; so long as the United States abide by the present maritime system, their revenue will be precarious, and they will be more or less entangled with all the quarrels of Europe.

Since the Almighty has separated these States, by a wide watry wall, from those nations whose study is *war*, and whose rule of conduct is *power* ; and also put a rich prize into our hands, saying, " occupy 'till I come ;" shall we hide our talent in a napkin, and prove by our conduct that a *prize has been put into the hand of a fool*.

If we had nothing in view, but to bring the belligerents to terms of just accommodation, every useful manufactory established in this country, would conduce more towards it, than a seventy-four gun ship of war.

Let this country manufacture for itself, and those powers will loose the best customer of their markets. As those powers are more dependent on us for necessities, than we are on them for fopperies, it has ever been an argument with me, that the best way to fight them, was, by *commercial regulations* : But if we supply ourselves without their markets, we shall have nobody to fight with.

We are hypocrites to call ourselves *independent*, until

til we are so in fact. While we continue as commercial as we now are, we shall always be exposed to *foreign influence*, to embitter brother against brother, and distract our councils.

The plan here suggested, though it pleads for itself, with more than Ciceronian eloquence, has nevertheless potent difficulties to encounter—difficulties which may prevent its adoption.

Since the treaty in 1783, notwithstanding our commerce has been somewhat interrupted by Britain and France, yet such streams of wealth have flown into these states from that source, that the people will *hardly* quit the pursuit of that which has been so lucrative, for the untried path of manufactures.

Where land is abundant, labor will be dear. The unmeasurable lengths and breadths of rich unimproved land within these states, in which every man may easily get a portion in fee, will, for a long time, impede our manufactures, if the people can be supplied any other way.

Should a sufficient number turn their attention to all the branches of manufactures necessary for the comforts of life, by the time they get into a line of profit, the European kingdoms, particularly Great-Britain, would try every way to crush the egg; and, if they should be admitted into our markets, would effect their wish by an under-sale. The fear of this, has checked many attempts.

Our system of revenue is grounded principally on commerce; should commerce, therefore, be restrained, it would be a case of some embarrassment to fix the mode of revenue.

Add to these observations, if the Europeans and their colonists are secluded from our ports and provisions,

ions, thousands and thousands of them will starve with hunger, not having land to occupy.

Should war, however, break out, and continue long, these obstructions to manufactures must and would vanish away. As much, therefore, as war is to be dreaded, this good effect, it is morally certain, would follow.

Another good effect which would attend a war, would be a thorough purging of the *rebels* from our country. At the close of the Revolutionary War, our governments exercised unbounded benevolence towards the *Tories and Co.* and have been rewarded therefor with the blackest ingratitude. Opposition and reproach to our government and rulers, has been their constant trade, (except when there was a manifest departure from fundamental principles.) Should another war commence, they must not expect the mild correction of medical *tar*, and the soft *down* of a goose ; but a perpetual banishment from the country which they have so much abused—from the protection of the laws, which they have so constantly ridiculed—and from the least favor from those rulers, which they have vilified without cessation. Goodness itself would blush at the thought of inflicting on them any thing less than exile for life.

But, in the present crisis,

Thirdly. What is best for the United States to do ?

It is easier to ask this question than it is to answer it. Shall our vessels and crews be allowed to arm in their own defence, and repel all who attack them, force by force ?—If so, upon what footing ?—Under the American flag, with their protections in their pockets ; or without either ?—Should a single vessel and crew brave the high seas without flag or protection, no government would be responsible for their conduct. In this case they would have no home, be under no

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government,

government, and protected by none. If they run all risques themselves, it would be unjust to tax them at any port.

Is this what is wished for, by those who plead for the arming policy, in our present dilemma ?

If this is allowed of, the vessel would be nominally a pirate ; and if the crew did not commit all piratical destruction, it would flow from the goodness of their hearts, and not from any accountability which they were under. Let this be allowed of by government, and ships crews could easily coalesce, and form a fleet which would sweep the ocean. I would be here understood, that if governments in general allow of such kind of arming, out of all of them the destructive fleet would be formed, which would be an absolute Monarchy, floating on the ocean.

This kind of arming I conclude, therefore, is not contended for.

Shall our vessels and crews then be allowed to arm under the flag of the United States ?—They arm—they meet a hostile ship—they fight—they conquer—they take a great spoil—will they bring their prize into port and resign it up to government ? No.

On the other hand, they meet a foe—they fight—they are conquered—their ship and cargo is lost—they are all made prisoners. Will they now cry to government to interfere for them ? Yes. On the side of government this is all *Hawk* and no *Turkey*.

Neither Britain nor France has declared war with the United States. Each of them, however, commit the acts of war without a formal declaration. Nor is it likely that either of them will declare war with us, except we join with one of them.

Shall we imitate them, or stand on the neutral ground which we have taken ?

I own

I own my conceptions are small ; but in this case I cannot see how our government can allow vessels to arm in their own defence and fight the foe, without either establishing a piratical party, or plunging into the existing war.

Our government has called in their shipping and shut them up in ports, leaving the hostile nations to enjoy the wide ocean.

This *Embargo* is an experiment on probation. If it answers a good purpose, it will save much wealth ; but if it does not succeed, it can be taken off in an hour. My fears are, that the patriotism of the people will not be sufficient to give it time to produce the good which it naturally tends to.

To me it has appeared the best measure that could be pursued, in the present rupture. It has certainly given the people time to think. If the Congress, who laid on the *Embargo*, see any better measure, no doubt they will pursue the best. If this Congress, however, should not remove it, and the people consider it impolitic, they will choose men of their feelings, who will raise the domestic blockade next March.

The task is yours, young gentlemen, in connection with your cotemporaries ; on your shoulders the burden lies. Your fathers gained the Independence of these States, at the expense of much hardship, treasure, and blood. They have also, with great pains, established state governments, of *republican* genius, and a national government for the good of the whole.

Conscious of their own liability to err, they have provided the means of peaceable amendments to the national government, whenever experience discovers any defects ; guarding their descendants thereby as
much

much from being slaves to the opinions of their fathers, as slaves to foreign powers.

But the fathers of the revolution are, many of them, dead, while others are going the way of all the earth. They leave to you, young patriots, your Independence and Liberty, as a patrimony, and it is for you to improve or waste it.

The present is a critical moment. It is for you *now* to mark out the path to walk in, and give tone to the government under which you have been matured.

Will you cringe before the insulting foes, or convince them in their insolence that America is full of DECATUR'S ?

Will you endure hardness a small moment, that you may be out of their reach forever ; or will you, for the sake of a penny more on each pound of produce, sink yourselves into everlasting bondage ?

An accommodation may yet take place. The heavens have been as dark over our heads with angry clouds as they now are, and have been succeeded with light, like the clear shining after the rain. Some hopes yet remain, that the belligerents may be convinced of their injustice and repeal their decrees.

But if the worst comes—war, with all its horrors, we need not fear. Our cause is just—our God is strong !

We ask for nothing but our right. We do not wish to *trick* them out of a penny, nor *force* from them a cent. We have no desire to impress their men—condemn their ships and cargoes—nor disturb them in their ports.

As our present rupture is principally with Great-Britain, if we are asked what we want of that government ?—We answer,

“ 1. Restore

“ 1. Restore all the vessels and cargoes, which you have taken from our citizens, contrary to treaty and the law of nations, together with the damages which arose from detention, cost of court, &c.

“ 2. Restore all the seamen which you have impressed from American ships, that are living, and 500 dollars for each one that is dead.

“ 3. Hang those men who murdered our citizens within our own waters, if they did it without the authority of their government; but if they committed the murders by the authority or connivance of their government, then hang the government, after it has repented in sackcloth and ashes, and let a better government reign in its stead.

“ 4. Give assurances, that our flag shall be honored—our vessels not taken nor searched—our seamen not impressed, nor our citizens murdered.”

On this footing we will unite as brothers. Here let the *President* and the *King* pass the friendly glass. Around this fire let the two governments smoke the peace pipe. Then, and not 'till then, we will send our Cotton and Tobacco to England—our Flax-Seed and Potash to Ireland, and our Lumber and Provisions to the Islands, and receive their Dry Goods and Groceries in return. But short of *this* we cannot—we will not. Short of *this*, we will turn our attention to manufactures, and imitate the Chinese in our œconomy, and live retired from the snares of all nations.

For these assurances, we want something more than *treaty promises*. Experience is daily warning of us, that *Treaties*, like *Custom-House Oaths*, are not to be depended upon. Let pledges be given,—Let the jurisdiction of the Canada's and Novascotia, together with all British property in the ports and Banks of the United States, be the pledge, on the part of Great-Britain. And all claim to the high seas
and

and the carrying trade, be the pledge on the part of the United States, to be surrendered the moment the *Treaty* is infringed upon. If these, or such like pledges should be given, still there remains a vacant chasm. Let the *Treaty* be broken, each government would be its own judge, and *right* would finally yield to might.

Let us then turn our attention wholly to the cultivation of our own soil, and manufacture for ourselves, and quit every idea of commercial intercourse with other nations. This promises *all* the necessaries, and *most* of the luxuries of life, without war or diplomatic negotiation.

But here again we are brought to a stand. Detached from all other nations, we are full of faction among ourselves. Unless there is some stop to electioneering intrigue and thirst for office, our empire will crumble into dust. No man can be found amidst it all who owns himself a partizan, or wishes for an office ; but each professes to be *true American*, influenced alone by patriotic views ; but the moment that the great body of labourers flatter themselves with a little rest, that moment these high professors of patriotism dart like lightning to cheat them out of their *rights*.

Where then shall we turn our eyes ? To whom shall we look for help ? What course shall we pursue for happiness and safety ? Young gentlemen, these questions are serious interrogations.

The whole world cannot give what each immortal soul needs. Neither happiness nor safety can be found in all that exists below the sun.

Some constitutions and codes of laws are better than others ; some modes of administering government are preferable to others ; some conditions of life are more enviable than others ; but I despair of ever seeing the state of individual man, or of society, *much*
ameliorated,

ameliorated, *except by the power and practice of godliness, which is profitable unto all things.*

Turning to the Lord with a true heart—believing in the Gospel of Christ with the whole soul—and yielding obedience to the precepts of Religion, is the short way of gaining that safety and happiness, which individuals and nations are ever striving after, but never obtain.

The wisest man that was ever born of a woman, after having tried all things below the sun, has left us the admonition, that *Religion* as far excels every thing else, as *light* excels darkness ; and at the close of his days, the conclusion which he drew from all the experiments of his life, was, “ Fear God and keep his commandments.”

No scheme ever published among men, except the Gospel of Jesus, has given them any hope of the resurrection from the dead, or any information how sin can be pardoned.

True faith in this gospel, with a steady reliance on the power, wisdom and goodness of the author of it, support the trembling soul through wars, famines, pestilences, sickness, pain and death.

With the *promises* of the gospel, written on the heart, the pious saint may laugh at calamity and brave all the convulsions of empire ; and with the precepts of it before his eyes, he can be at no loss about the path of his duty.

I therefore close my address, young gentlemen, by recommending the *Religion of Jesus* as the principle thing, both for this world and that which is to come.